

A Maid of '76

Emilie Benson Kripe
Alden Arthur Kripe

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I made a fair portrait of her

A MAID OF '76

BY
EMILIE BENSON KNIPE
AND
ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

ILLUSTRATED BY
EMILIE BENSON KNIPE

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I CHARLOTTE GOES TO MARKET	I
II MY HEART'S DESIRE	13
III A CIRCLE OF CATS	25
IV AN ACT OF WAR	34
V THE RED HAND	44
VI THE BEAT OF THE DRUMS	55
VII COUNTING THE MINUTES	66
VIII JANE WEDS THE DOCTOR	76
IX THE PARTING OF THE WAYS	87
X WE START UPON A JOURNEY	95
XI JIMMY MEETS HIS GENERAL	101
XII WE REACH BOSTON	109
XIII SPIES	117
XIV THE PRISONER IN THE NEXT ROOM	129
XV MISTRESS CECELIE PEMBERTON	144
XVI HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL GAGE	153
XVII A NEW FRIENDSHIP	164
XVIII A PAIR OF PORTRAITS	171
XIX GOOD-BYE TO BOSTON	180
XX IN THE CABIN OF THE "SALLY"	189
XXI WE STEER FOR FRANCE	202
XXII WE FIND FRIENDS IN LONDON	208
XXIII HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE III	217
XXIV A LETTER FROM AMERICA	227
XXV A MAN TO SELL A PARROT	236
XXVI A LIBERATOR O' THE LANGUISHIN'	250
XXVII HOME	264

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

I made a fair portrait of her	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
I gazed at the scene, half-frightened, half-fascinated . . .	30
A blood-red hand pointing at our house	50
“ ’Tis General Washington! ” he cried	108
He wore a dainty mask of pink satin	210
It was the safe-conduct given me by Mr. Washington . .	268

A Maid of '76

CHAPTER I

CHARLOTTE GOES TO MARKET

"**I**S that you, Charlotte?" came the muffled voice of Aunt Abigail, from behind the draperies of the huge four-post bed in which she lay.

"Yes, Aunt Nabby," I answered, closing the door of the room softly behind me. "Moll said you wished to see me, and I'm sorry —"

"Set wide the bed-curtains," she broke in, impatiently. "I've slept no wink this night for an aching tooth. I fear I shall have no ease till it is drawn."

"I'm sorry —" I began again, as I crossed the room to do her bidding; but once more she interrupted me.

"Nay, that I know, but 'twill not mend the tooth. And on a market day, too!" she ended with a groan.

It was a somewhat fearsome figure I gazed down upon when I had parted the curtains of the bed. Aunt Abigail lay propped up on a pile of pillows, staring at me with one bloodshot eye, the other being covered by a piece of crimson flannel that

bound her swollen jaws. Her mouth was twisted so that she spoke through one corner of it with some difficulty, as I could see, and as she nodded her head to emphasise her words, the ruffles of her night-cap flapped up and down softly like the wings of a huge bat.

We children loved Aunt Nabby, who had stood in place of a mother to us for many years, albeit she was very severe and kept us more or less in fear of her. Nevertheless she was always just, giving us our rewards as promptly as our punishments.

“ ’Tis no use to consider sending Jane,” she went on. “ She has no thought but for her plenishings and her silly doctor.”

Which was true to my thinking, seeing that Jane was near to her wedding day, and I was ready enough to agree that Doctor Jones was far from romantical, though perhaps that was not what Aunt Nabby meant by “ silly.”

“ Sure, I’ll be glad to market for you,” I said, knowing what was in her mind.

“ No doubt! No doubt! ” she answered crossly, her night-cap flapping violently the while, “ but who can trust a child to drive a bargain? ”

“ Nay, I’m fourteen and no child,” I exclaimed, holding myself a great girl at that age.

“ Aye, you’ve years enough,” Aunt Nabby retorted, “ but at the chaffering — I’d sooner leave it to your little brother Jimmy, though he is but nine! Nay, do not answer back,” she went on,

though I had no thought of speaking. "Go you must, and do the best you can. Price everything as you walk through and buy nothing without cheapening it. Remember that Gaffer Cruse hath the best butter but asks full thrippence more than he expects."

She handed me a list of things to buy, and with it a heavy purse; but, evidently repenting at the last moment, she held to one end of it.

"'Tis ruinous," she muttered, "to send you who ne'er made a bargain in your life. Nay, I'll go myself after all."

She strove to rise, but at the first movement she clapped a hand to her jaw with a loud outcry of pain, sinking back upon her pillows as she loosened her hold upon the money-bag.

"Be off with you," she fair screamed, and turned her face to the wall.

I needed no second mandate to send me scurrying from the room, albeit I was at pains not to slam the door behind me.

Proud of my errand and my full purse I set about my task at once by summoning Moll, our buttery maid. She was a hoydenish lump of a country girl, a year or two my senior, but of so simple a mind that she truly seemed more of a child than did little Jimmy.

"Fetch the market-baskets, Moll," I commanded, "and tell Gregory he goes with me to carry them."

"Laws, Miss Sharly!" she cried, holding high

her hands to show her surprise. "Miss Abigail must have nigh a mortal ailment to let *thee* do her marketing."

"Hold thy tongue, Moll," I retorted, though not in anger, for while her speech was more than a shade too free at times, she indeed meant no harm.

"You'll wear the chip hat?" she questioned, excitedly. "'Tis vastly becoming and makes thee look a good twelve-month older than —"

"Aye, I'll wear the chip," I interrupted, for once started she would never cease her silly chatter. "Run you now and fetch the baskets. I must be off ere the best is sold."

She darted away but came back on the instant, another thought popping into her mind.

"Wrap the new India shawl about thy shoulders Miss Charlotte," she half-whispered in her eagerness. "'Tis a proper garment for a housewife and I's warrant will help thy bargaining."

"Nay, I need no shawl in this warm weather," I laughed in answer, for it was well on in June.

"Faith, the weather hath naught to do with it," she began; but I stopped short her arguments, and at length she went off, shaking her head resignedly.

Now this remark of Moll's about the shawl, set me a-thinking as I went to my room to make ready for my marketing adventure. In the stress of my unexpected responsibilities I had forgotten for the moment that all was not well in our little village of

Elmtree in the Massachusetts. To be sure I was too young, in that year of our Lord 1775, to have a very clear idea of how the great controversy between the Colonies of America and the Mother Country had come about; although my heart had been strangely stirred by a stand made at Lexington by our raw Colonial militia against the seasoned soldiers of the King; and for the past few days rumours of a great battle near Boston, where the British troops were quartered, had begun to reach us. Men said that our soldiers had actually driven back the redcoats more than once at a place called Bunker's Hill, but this was scarce counted possible.

All of these happenings seemed very far away from Elmtree, and I could not as yet realise their serious import. Moreover Aunt Nabby had warned me again and again that "a proper female meddled not in politics." Nevertheless I should have been blind indeed not to have seen that something was gravely amiss. Good neighbours of long standing had cooled in their friendship the one to the other, while even among the children the word "Tory" was beginning to be bandied about as a name of reproach and scorn.

And I, Charlotte Morton, had already felt the sting of it, for my dear father was a Tory who was not minded to hide his honest opinions for fear of consequences, as were some; but rather deemed it a duty to his king to show his loyalty whenever and wherever he could. When it came about that tea

was banned by the Colonies, father flung wide the curtains before the windows so that all might see that he and his family still drank that pleasant beverage as usual. Then too, although he liked a befitting plainness in his daughters' dress, he now insisted that I and my older sister Jane should be tricked out in fine India stuffs, instead of the simple home-spun which all others wore, rich or poor, rather than that the King should have the duties levied upon imported goods.

Thus father made it plain how he stood, recking not the gain or loss, and there were a few who respected him for holding to his convictions, but others there were who murmured against him; though how serious this was to become I was yet to see.

Thus I was at pains to dress simply, putting aside Moll's suggestion to wear my Indian shawl because of an even better reason than I had given her; for had I decked myself in it, I should have laid myself open to the taunt of "Tory," which in my secret heart I was far from deserving.

I set off across the common opposite our house, walking quite sedately, while Gregory followed a pace behind. Moll had run down with me to the gate and stood watching, on tiptoe with the excitement she anticipated for me in this unusual event. Nor was I without a feeling of elation and pride over the importance of my errand, and I resolved to justify my own confidence in my ability to drive

a good bargain in spite of Aunt Nabby's discouraging prediction.

I scanned her list with care, wishing to familiarize myself with its contents.

"There are no onions ordered," I thought, surprised that so important a vegetable should have been omitted. "Aunt Nabby forgot them, for sure I've heard that a roasted onion is fine for an aching tooth. Or was it an aching ear?" I could not be certain, but resolved to buy a few, thinking if they were good for one kind of an ache why not for another?

Come to the market, I elbowed my way through the noisy crowd pressed between the stalls, scarce able to hear for the shrill screams of the chaffering women; but I was soon used to it and moved on slowly, glancing right and left to discover who had the freshest and cheapest wares. Now and then I stopped to ask the price of this or that, only to go on again with a cool shake of the head, even though I meant to return to purchase.

'Twas some time ere I noted that a quick silence fell upon each little group when I approached and glances were exchanged, the meaning of which I could not guess. When I passed on, there would be a buzz of whispering ere the chaffering began again. But I scarce heeded this, being intent upon my business.

At length, feeling sure that I knew where lay the best of the bargains, I stopped before a motherly

looking woman and asked her the price of a pair of fine fowls.

She looked at me with a kindly twinkle in her eye and named a fair sum. But remembering Aunt Nabby's injunction always to cheapen, I shook my head emphatically, offering sixpence less than she had asked.

"Eh, but you're the young housewife to be so sharp," she laughed good-humouredly.

"'Tis what Gaffer Cruse wants for his," I answered, which was true, though they were not so plump, "and I doubt not he will cheapen them an I ask him."

"If that's how the wind blows," she cried gaily, picking up the pullets "'tis best I strike a bargain ere you ask pay for taking them away."

I had thought the matter settled and was feeling not a little elated at the success of my first venture, when the woman at the stall adjoining took a hand in the proceedings.

"I'll take thy chicks at thy own price," she snapped, nudging the other in her fat sides. "Know ye not 'tis James Morton's daughter?" she added, lowering her voice, though I could still hear her plainly enough.

At that the first woman turned to me, not unkindly, but with a certain stiffness of manner.

"You see how it is," she said; "you waited too long over your bargaining."

"There's another pair as good," I returned

"I'll have those," and I pointed to an equally plump brace of fowls.

"Nay, they're not for sale," she answered promptly, adding under her breath, "to you."

"But I've good hard money to pay with," I insisted, not yet catching the drift of this talk.

"Aye, British gold!" she sputtered angrily, and then I understood.

Because my father was a Loyalist his family were interdicted. Because he was on the King's side he was to be treated as an enemy, even though he loved the land of his adoption as well as any in the village. Because he believed that his duty lay in obeying the authorities, he and all connected with him were to be made to suffer. It was now no longer a matter of hard words but of hard deeds.

But I could not credit at first that we were to be the victims of a conspiracy, so I went on to another booth and asked the prices of some vegetables.

"Ye've pepper and tea a-plenty," the man told me with a scowl. "With such, ye need not common cabbages and carrots."

"Will you not sell me, then?" I asked in dismay.

"Nay, not an ye were starvin'!" he burst out, and would have said more, but I left him hurriedly, amid a chorus of jeers.

Still I could not persuade myself that all of the farmers, from whom we had bought for years, would turn against me, so I hurried to Gaffer Cruse,

a kindly old man, who had known me well from my babyhood.

But even he shook his head.

"Nay, missy," he said gently, "go thy way home. 'Tis agreed to sell nothing in this market to the King's friends."

"But I'm no King's friend," I burst out recklessly.

"'Twill do you no good to say that," the old man answered. "You must e'en take your politics from your father. Go home with you. Trust me, 'tis best."

So with a full purse and a heavy heart, I took my way back, thinking not so much of the fact that I could buy no food, for indeed I doubted if we stood in any sore need, but rather that a serious crisis had come in our affairs; and I resolved that father should be the first to have the news of my adventure in the market. Of course Aunt Nabby would scold, vowing that it was all my fault; but that troubled me not at all, for my heart was filled with anxiety for the future. I seemed suddenly to realise that the time was at hand when all must be friends or enemies, and what that would mean to our own family I dared not think.

I found father in his library, and he heard me out with a grave face, and at the end sitting silent, gazing out of the window without seeing the village common upon which he looked.

Poor father! I felt that he was dwelling on the time but a few months past when every one in Elmtree had held him in respect; when men of all stations had come to him for counsel and advice. He had been well beloved in the community for an upright, kindly man who was ever wont to do more than his duty to his neighbours. And now they turned against him, refusing even to sell him food.

I needed no words of his to tell me that he suffered sorely, but I knew that a worse blow was in store for him and trembled for the time when he must learn that his own family, who loved him dearly, were against his king.

"I must to Aunt Nabby and tell her the news," I said at length, rising from my chair.

"Nay, I will tell her," he made answer, springing to his feet with an energy that showed he had come to some decision, and leaving the room hurriedly.

I turned to the window and looked out across the Common. It was a beautiful day, and the birds outside were singing for very joy of living. Inside all was still, save for the faint noises from the kitchen and buttery where the servants busied themselves. All the world seemed so peaceful that it was hard to realise that in the hearts of men was a great bitterness the end of which no one could foresee.

But that a mighty struggle was to come, only the

wisest could have hazarded a guess. As for me, my thoughts were all on my father whom I loved dearly. For him a day of sorrow was at hand, and I could see no way to spare him the pain of it.

CHAPTER II

MY HEART'S DESIRE

I NEVER knew, of course, what father said to Aunt Nabby. I expected that in spite of her aching tooth she would get up from her bed and hie her to the market to berate right soundly the farmers who had refused to sell me their produce; but in this I was mistaken, for though she appeared shortly, grumbling over this and that, she spoke not of my experience that morning and I escaped a scolding.

Nor was aught said of the matter at dinner, which was indeed a dismal meal. Father, whose habit it was to be gay and lively at table, sat silent, scarce eating, his forehead furrowed in perplexity and his eyes fixed upon his plate. Aunt Nabby, her face mightily swollen, looked so fearsome a figure that even little Jimmy forgot to be his usual talkative self and, though he ate heartily enough, watched her with childish awe.

Jane was too full of her own affairs to notice that aught was amiss; but Ethan, the oldest of us children, sent me a glance of inquiry, to which I shook my head, both as a caution to him not to

ask questions and a hint that I would tell him all when we were alone.

This Ethan understood, for we had been such close friends from my babyhood that we needed few words to tell each other what was in our thoughts. To me there was no one in the world like Ethan. All of my small troubles and uncertainties I took to him, and never failed of receiving a sympathetic response or kindly advice. He was only nineteen years old, but to me he seemed a man of great wisdom whose judgments I never questioned. Jane I loved, of course, but Ethan, little Jimmy and I had drawn nearer to each other, for my elder sister had many interests in which we had no share and had for long been too grown-up to bother much with our childish affairs. Then, too, she was soon to wed and, naturally, was so filled with the importance of this coming event, that she had little time for my confidences.

After dinner father called Ethan into his study, Jane hurried off to the sewing-room, and Aunt Nabby, as was her wont when aught ailed her, began a general overhauling of the jam closets, the root-cellar and the buttery, as if her very life depended upon it.

"When Moll told me Aunt Nabby had an aching tooth I knew we should have a fine cleaning up," Jimmy remarked, as we fled out of the way, "and so did Moll," he added with a chuckle.

The house was no place for us in the circum-

stances and we hurried to the barns where we found that orders had been given to saddle father's horse, from which we guessed he was bent upon a journey. Ethan came soon to confirm this surmise, and not long after, father himself appeared with his saddlebags packed.

He kissed Jimmy and me good-bye and, with scarce a word, mounted his horse and rode rapidly away. "Does he fare to Boston, Ethan?" I asked, after a moment.

"I know not," he answered gloomily.

"He told you what happened at the market?"

"Aye," came the reply, and then, in a burst of apprehension, "Oh, how will it all end?"

"You haven't told him?" I questioned anxiously.

"I had not the heart," he said, with a sad shake of his head, "but sooner or later he must know and then —!" He stopped and turned away.

"But Ethan, can we do naught?" I demanded.

He shook his head despondently.

"Were father a less honest man I might have hope," he murmured half to himself. "As it is I see no way to change his opinion, and unless he alters, there is much sorrow in store for all of us."

This then was the whole point of our trouble. Father must be brought to change his opinions, but how that was to be compassed I knew not, though it was the goal upon which I had set my heart and which I had puzzled over for many weary weeks.

In truth I thought little of father's sudden excursion, for his business affairs took him often to Boston, a good two days' journey away, and I was rather glad he was gone, for now I saw a chance to further a plan which I would not have dared attempt save in his absence.

To this end, a day or two later, I sorted over my trinkets, grieved to find them of so little worth.

"I wonder what Moll gave her?" I murmured to myself, and as if in answer, the girl stuck her head in at the door of my bed-chamber.

"'J'u call me, Miss Charlotte?" she asked, knowing full well that I had done no such thing.

"Nay," I replied, "but come hither."

Moll entered on tiptoe, and after placing her besom and dust-pan against the wall, closed the door softly behind her. 'Twas plain enough she guessed what was in my mind.

"Tell me, Moll," I went on in a hushed voice, "what did you give the wise woman that she served you so well?"

Moll hesitated for a moment, as indeed she well might, considering the revelation she was about to make.

"I gave her a pound of green tea," she half-whispered, looking furtively over her shoulder as if she expected Aunt Nabby to appear.

"A pound of green tea!" I exclaimed astonished. "Where got you that? The sale of tea is forbid."

Moll flopped down on the floor beside me.

"Nay, I didn't buy it," she replied half-defiantly, knowing well what the next question would be.

"Did you take it, then, from Miss Abigail?" I asked severely.

"Aye, I took it," she retorted brazenly. "I took it — a pinch at a time — and 'tis no manner of use to look at me like that, Miss Sharly. 'Twasn't stealin' 'cause I ne'er drank a drop. I'm too good a patriot to touch the stuff, though 'twas a sore temptation of a cold day. I but put a pinch less in the pot than Madam Abigail bade me, for well you know some was due me for waiting upon her in the afternoons. Nay, 'twas not stealing."

"It scarce seems honest," I replied, half puzzled.

"Think you Madam Abigail would begrudge me a dish of tea?" she demanded indignantly.

"Nay, I'm sure she wouldn't," I answered, "yet —"

"Then I but took my own, dry instead of wet," declared Moll righteously; and I could not say her nay.

"But what did the wise woman give you?" I asked.

"She promised me my heart's desire, and I got it, too!" cried Moll, giggling outright.

"Hush," I warned her, and she brought her red hand across her mouth to stopper the noise.

"I'd give all I have in the world to gain my heart's desire," I murmured, half to myself.

"Nay now, there's no need to be so lavish," Moll

whispered. "I could save another pound of tea, though 'twould take a sad long time. But tell me, Miss Sharly," she went on, leaning closer to me, "who is thy heart's desire?"

"Who?" I repeated, not catching her meaning. "What mean you?"

"Thy heart's desire," said Moll, with a knowing chuckle. "Who is the pretty gentleman? Nay, do not shake thy head but tell thy Moll. She'll be as secret as — as the skillet."

"And was your heart's desire a like foolishness?" I demanded, seeing now where lay her thoughts, and Moll nodded with a silly smile upon her broad face.

"Then your wise woman is of no use to me," I said sadly, beginning to pick up my small store of treasures.

"Now what need could ye have of a witch in any other case?" asked Moll, genuinely puzzled.

"There are greater things than love and such dalliance," I burst out in some heat.

"I ne'er heard of them," said Moll stolidly.

"There's war and politics," I made answer.

"Does your wise woman know aught of them?"

Moll's furrowed brow showed her perplexity, but she replied steadily enough.

"I make no doubt she does. She knows everything. At any rate it could do no harm to ask her."

"Dost think so, truly?" I questioned hopefully.

"'Tis not exactly that I wish to know anything," I went on more hesitatingly. "'Tis that I want a charm."

"Then she's the one for you!" exclaimed Moll excitedly. "White magic or black, she hath ne'er an equal. I heard Deacon Budd say that a hundred years gone she would have been burned at the stake. Could you ask greater proof than that of her powers?"

Indeed that seemed to settle the matter, and I spread out my trinkets once more.

"What think you will do to pay her with?" I asked rather anxiously.

Moll, quite alive to the importance of the occasion, looked over my trifles carefully, at length picking out a silver pap spoon, which she regarded with her head on one side.

"Give her this," she suggested. "'Twill be enough for a fine charm."

"Nay not that," I said with a touch of bitterness. "'Tis a present from my father's 'Gracious Majesty's' Queen Charlotte, I being the first child in the Colonies to be named for her. Not that I would grudge it."

"Aye, that I know," Moll agreed.

"How will this do?" I asked, picking up a brooch which I especially prized. "Will she give me a charm for this?"

"That she will," answered Moll, "but 'tis too much for an ordinary charm."

"Then she shall have it, for 'tis no ordinary charm I want."

Thus I settled that much of the business, and though I liked not to part with my brooch, that very fact seemed to make the chance that I would get my wish the more probable. Moll was inclined to murmur, knowing that I had a great fondness for the ornament, but I put an end to that in short order.

"Nay, say no more about it," I told her. "I'm off at once!" And forthwith began packing away the rest of my treasures.

"'Tis useless to go by day," Moll announced positively.

"Now why?" I asked in surprise.

"Mayhap the spirits will not do her bidding in the daylight," she answered.

"More like she is afraid of the officers of the law," I suggested, my temper ruffled at this unexpected difficulty.

"'Tis all one," Moll retorted, "you must e'en seek her at night."

"Now that I dare not do!" I exclaimed.

"I went, and took no hurt," Moll reassured me. "And 'twas darker than 'twill be to-night. I was sore frightened, that I'll own, but naught touched me, though to be sure I saw a shpook at every turn."

"But how can I get free of the house?" I asked helplessly.

"By the same road I did," she replied serenely.

"The buttery window lacks a catch, and there's ne'er a squeak left in it since I smeared the shutter-hinge with my supper butter a week ago."

"But the door of the buttery is always locked at bed-time," I protested, as if eager to make the expedition impossible; for in truth, since I must go at night, my ardour for the adventure had cooled.

"Ah, that's true too," Moll agreed readily, and then, coming nearer, whispered, "but the key to the parlour door fits the lock."

Alas, my last excuse was gone. Either I had to admit that I lacked the courage to face the wise woman at night, or else I must brave the matter through. Then too, I was ashamed of my fear; for if Moll had gone on a light matter, I were a poltroon to hesitate when so much was at stake.

But in truth it was no trivial thing I had undertaken. Like every other maid or youth in the village I had been cautioned against the old witch of Elmtree. Since I could remember we children had passed her hut with hastened steps and quickly beating hearts, and though such superstition was not the fashion of that day, there were many a deal older than I who had a secret dread, and a secret faith, too, in the spells and charms she was said to work. Nor was father's laughing comment that the witch was a harmless old body who would hurt no one, of any great comfort to me in this hour, for, if I believed him, then I could expect naught from the mysterious

dame; while, on the other hand, if she had supernatural powers I must walk in terror of the spirits I hoped to have help me.

"Moll," I broke out, "think you 'tis worth while?"

"Nay, now, Miss Sharly, you're goin'," she interrupted.

And so it came about that I, Charlotte Morton, namesake of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, resolved, with a courage born of my anxiety, to brave the old witch of Elmtree to gain my heart's desire.

I scarce know how the rest of the day passed. The greater part of the long evening I spent in my chamber without a light, growing more and more fearful as I anticipated the imaginary terrors ahead of me. I was well-nigh daunted, and when the tall clock in the hall boomed eleven it seemed as if each stroke of the bell was a stroke against my heart. But the hour had come when I must go forthwith or else confess myself a coward, more concerned for my own comfort than the great good I hoped to ensure by a visit to the old witch.

With trembling fingers I opened my door and, closing it softly behind me, stole down the backstairs with my shoes in my hand. Without mishap I reached the lower floor and was about to seek the key of the parlour when a hand was laid on my arm.

"Nay, now, don't scream, Miss Sharly," came Moll's reassuring whisper just in time. "If you wake Madam Abigail, we'll both be punished."

"Moll," I murmured hopefully, "what are you doing here? Are you going with me?"

"Not me," she answered shamelessly. "I'm too feared. I but came to tell you that the minute men are out and if you go by the village you'll be seen."

"Now if you'd told me that this morning I would not have ventured," I rejoined.

"In truth I knew it not myself," answered Moll. "I but learned it to-night from one who's drilling. But 'tis only a step farther through the fields."

"'Tis a good half mile," I whimpered.

"Nay, not quite so far," Moll insisted, trying to hearten me. "If ye kilt high your skirts the wet grass will catch naught but your shoes and stockings, and they'll take no great hurt. And ye want your charm, don't ye?"

That reminder gave me fresh courage. Having come so far I was determined to go on with the business. Moll secured the key for me and, after putting on my shoes, I scrambled out of the buttery window to the ground.

"Good luck to ye, Miss Sharly," Moll whispered, and then the shutters closed noiselessly behind me and I was alone under the stars.

For a moment I faltered, then with a backward glance at the silent house I started off.

I circled the village, as Moll had warned me I must, tucking up my petticoats to keep them free of the dew, and so after a time came to a thicket on the far side of Elmtree. My heart quickened

its beating as I plunged into the damp woods and the shrill cry of a night-hawk sounded so close that I halted for a moment, panting as if I had been running. An owl hooted dismally not far away and all about me were soft, mysterious noises as if a host of little animals rustled among the trees. Katydid and tree-frogs sung their loudest in the branches overhead, for the night was warm and the air was laden with the heavy odour of moist green leaves. But it was only for a moment I stopped. I had no thought now of turning back, though a sob of apprehension escaped me as I started on again, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

And at length I won to the lonely, silent little hut, standing well away from the weed-grown lane. Shrubs and vines nigh covered it, and in that dim light it looked both solitary and unreal. The final test of my courage had come, and I scarce could persuade my feet to carry me up to the dark cottage. What should I find within? I dared not think and, on impulse, fearing that if I pondered the matter longer I should turn and run, I went forward till I reached the black door and raised my hand to knock.

But ere I struck a harsh voice sounded from within.

"Enter, loving heart," came the command, and almost instinctively, I pressed down the latch and stepped into the room.

CHAPTER III

A CIRCLE OF CATS

FOR a moment after I had crossed the old witch's threshold I could scarce see. It was as if I had walked into a cave that shut out even the pale light of the stars. To be sure a small fire burned upon the hearth at the far side of the room, but its fitful flicker seemed only to make the velvety darkness of my surroundings the deeper.

Suddenly, as I stood immovable, a half-blinding greenish flame leaped up among the embers, throwing startling shadows upon the four walls and showing me a figure, huddled in a high-backed chair, stirring the coals with a great staff. At the same instant a harsh voice broke the silence.

"Step hither, for you come in love," it said.

"Nay, I come in fear," I answered, involuntarily.

"'Tis all one," continued the voice, and then followed a chuckling laugh, that sent a shiver of dread through me.

"Fear and love," the witch went on, still keeping her back to me, "are ills that all suffer, soon or late. Mayhap I have a medicine for them. Come, sit ye here," and she made a sweeping gesture with one arm.

Trembling I crossed the room to the three-legged stool she had indicated and, as I seated myself upon it, she stirred the fire again, then turned toward me and I looked into the face of the old witch of Elm-tree.

I could not guess at her age. She might have been a hundred, so many and so fine were the wrinkles that seamed her skin; but her eyes, small and very black, were bright like the eyes of a fox. She was oddly dressed, wearing a red petticoat with a black band about it and over this a purple gown, well tucked up. On her head was a ruffled cap surmounted by a straw hat with a steeple crown and a great, flapping brim. This much I saw of her, though the waning of the greenish light made all dim.

She regarded me keenly for a moment, leering at me with a grin that brought her pointed chin almost to touch her hooked nose.

"You say you come in fear," she croaked, "but you are no coward else would you not have come at all. Tell your tale."

She turned away from me again, stirring the fire with her iron-shod staff till the ghastly flames leapt up anew.

"'Twill be hard to make all clear," I began in a trembling voice.

"Aye, 'tis that they all say!" she cut in. "Love tales always take a deal of telling."

"'Tis no love tale," I protested, forgetting my

fear for the moment. "It is of my father I wish to speak."

"Your father!" exclaimed the old dame. "Your father! Ha! what of him?"

"I know not how to begin," I faltered. "'Tis a matter of politics — and father —"

"Is a Tory!" The words burst from her venomously, and she scowled at me over her shoulder.

"Nay, he is a Loyalist," I answered, stung to his defence. "Indeed 'tis but natural he should be, seeing that he was born in England and has spoke the last King face to face. 'Tis not as if he were born here."

"He is a stiff-necked Tory!" she insisted, stirring the fire violently till the green flames hissed up the black chimney.

"He is not stiff-necked," I retorted, angered at the spite and ridicule she put into the words. "He is the kindest and gentlest of men, though he may be stubborn to do his duty as he sees it. He is a Loyalist; but we children, having been born in the Colonies, cannot think as he does and —"

"Did I not say you came in love?" the witch broke in, her tone softening. "Aye! Aye, 'twas love brought you."

"If 'twas love for father you meant, then I say 'yes,'" I replied. "He is not like some, who think only of themselves," I went on, gaining courage. "Twould be to his interest to side against the King,

for he is a man of substance who is like to lose much. He cares not, so long as he does what he holds is right."

"Then what brings you here?" asked the wise woman, poking at the fire.

"'Tis that I am afraid for father," I explained. "The patriots are growing bolder, and there is that in the air that brings a chill to my heart. We are shunned by our neighbours. The talk stops when I come near, and those who used to be friendly speak roughly, if belike they speak at all, and look askance and nudge each other when I'm by. But 'tis not for that I care. 'Tis that I fear some harm may befall father because he cleaves to the King and is not afraid to speak his mind."

"And what think you I can do?" demanded the old crone, after a moment's silence.

"Can you not give me a charm?" I cried, clasping my hands imploringly toward her. "Can you not give me a philter to put into his tea so that he may see rightly? He has taught us to love justice; can he not be made to see where justice lies?"

"Who told you I had such power?" she inquired.

"'Twas Moll Butts, our scullery maid," I answered. "She came to you and you gave her a true charm. See, I have brought this brooch. Take it and give me my heart's desire."

She turned and looked at the trinket I held out to her, her eyes glittering greedily, then with a

skinny hand she snatched it away, hiding it in a fold of her dress.

For a moment after she looked intently at me, her lips moving as if she talked, though indeed she made no sound; then, fumbling in her dress, she produced some coloured chinks and began to draw strange figures upon the hearth-stone, crooning to herself the while and seeming to forget all about me.

At the first sound of her chant there came from the darkest corners of the room, stepping silently on their padded paws, a solemn procession of black cats. Though I was too mazed to count them, there must have been at least a score that ranged themselves in a circle round the witch taking up a slow, shadowy march, rubbing against her dress as they passed, and all the while purring loudly until the room was filled with the murmur of it, and I was reminded of the sea beating upon a distant coast.

I gazed at the scene, half frightened, half fascinated. As the light of the fire was reflected from them, the eyes of the cats gleamed, seeming to flame like tiny candles in a deep pit. Now and then the old crone stirred the fire anew, at which the greenish blaze leaped up throwing monstrous shadows of the cats, moving in grotesque shapes upon the walls and floor, and all the while the ancient dame crooned her incantations and the cats kept up their purring as they walked sedately around her.

I cannot think I fell asleep, yet it was in a sort of dream that, at length, I heard her voice.

"'Tis useless!" she fair screamed, at which the cats began mewling dismally. "'Tis useless! You have come too late. The one you love must drink of the cup of experience."

"Oh, do not say that," I pleaded, nigh crushed under my disappointment. "Can you do naught? Have I come upon a bootless mission?"

"Nay, you shall have your heart's desire;" she answered, "but first, bitter sorrow shall be the portion of those you love, though it shall at last prove their salvation. The skein of your life is tangled. Great changes are in store for you. Yet if you will be brave and do the duties that lie nearest your hand, all will be well. Go now and take this much comfort with you. Should aught arise threatening you or yours, a warning will be sent. See that you heed it."

With that the wise woman stopped abruptly and turned back to the fire, stirring it again until it blazed and sputtered ominously.

Betwixt awe and fear I rose to take my leave of her, but could find no words to say and so silently made for the door. Reaching it, I paused for a farewell look at the scene. The wise woman had begun her chant anew, but now it was more lively and the cats, still mewling loudly, seemed to be performing a weird dance around their inscrutable mistress. They still circled about her, but now they ran faster and faster, their great eyes reflecting the green flames that waxed and waned as the old witch



I gazed at the scene, half frightened, half fascinated

stirred the embers. On the walls their huge ungainly shadows sprang up and down in unison, filling the room with moving shapes that seemed like creatures of another world.

I was held spell-bound for a minute or two, then a great fear overpowered me, and with a shudder I tore open the door and fled from the hut, running with all my speed, glad to be out once more under the stars.

Indeed I was greatly rejoiced to feel the solid ground under my feet, for it seemed as if I had come back to the earth after a visit to a land of mystery.

With my head in a whirl I returned swiftly the way I had come, nor did I stop for breath until I entered the wood. Its darkness brought me to a walk, though I liked not the dismal hooting of the owls after my experience at the hut. Nevertheless I pushed on, beginning now to worry about regaining my chamber without disturbing Aunt Nabby; for the queer happenings I had witnessed made the time I had been away seem much longer than it really was. In truth I should not have been surprised had I found a brightness in the east against the rising of the sun, and Mistress Abigail was ever astir before her maids.

But I tarried not within the thicket, for I could not help fancying I still saw restless, hurrying cats with green and glittering eyes, moving all about me in the darkness, and so, with lowered head, glancing neither to right nor left, I hurried on.

Suddenly a voice out of the blackness struck ominously upon my ear.

"Halt!" came the command. "Who goes there?" And I stayed in my tracks, my heart beating double time so startled was I. Yet ere I could answer, another spoke, and I recognised the voice as that of my brother Ethan.

"A friend, Captain Tower," he returned. "I was informed that you were watching here and I could wait no longer. I wish to enroll myself in your company of militia."

"So, here's another man who wishes to plant a foot firmly in each camp," replied the Captain with a sneer. "I had thought better of your father, Ethan Morton."

"And you may again!" Ethan replied hotly. "I fear that what I am doing now will go nigh to breaking his heart. But each man who is a man must think for himself, and I mean to fight for America if it costs me my birthright. My father has another son."

My heart seemed to thrill as I heard Ethan speaking, for I knew how earnestly he meant every word of what he said; but I could not blind myself to the bitter consequences that would be like to follow his action.

"I ask your father's pardon," said Captain Tower bluffly, "though I meant not what I said to you. I was but testing your spirit. Yet would it not be better to talk it over with Mr. Morton, Ethan?"

"Nay, I dare not," said Ethan. "'Tis time enough to let him know when he can no longer prevent it."

"A fine mixture of dutifulness and undutifulness, my boy!" cried the Captain. "But come with me," he continued, starting off. "I'll take you into the company right willingly. And to show my faith in your father's son, I'll tell you what I'm doing here. We have word that a great quantity of hay has been engaged for General Gage in Boston, and —"

I heard no more. Captain Tower and Ethan had moved out of earshot and I was again free to take my way home.

But my footsteps lagged a little. I forgot my fear for myself in the perplexity of my thoughts. Ethan had taken a position from which he could not in honour draw back, even were he so minded. The wise woman had told me that my heart's desire was far off, and, though I remembered her promise that I should be warned if harm came nigh those I loved, I was more ready to believe her dismal prophecies than those which held a grain of comfort. All in all, my night's adventure had brought me little pleasure.

As I opened the window to climb into the house my thoughts were again on Ethan.

"How many more know of this way out through the buttery?" I asked myself, and still wondering, tiptoed my way upstairs where, a few minutes later I was safe in bed.

CHAPTER IV

AN ACT OF WAR

I WOKE the next morning with a guilty feeling that I had over-slept, but a glance at the clock upon the mantel reassured me. I had a good ten minutes ere I need rise and I sank back upon my pillow with a sigh. Outside my windows the birds were chirping merrily, and from below came the sounds of the servants preparing the breakfast. Everything was so peaceful that it was well nigh impossible to realise that a black shadow of trouble hung over us, and that any day might see some act that would result in open hostility between us and our neighbours.

As I thought over my adventures of the night before I was secretly a little ashamed, not only of the fear I had felt, but also that I should have believed the wise woman had power to give me what I asked. In the broad light of day her cats and greenish flames seemed but a silly show intended to awe the ignorant. Nevertheless I had no desire to go thither again at night.

The fact that Ethan had joined the militia was a much more serious matter. He would have taken

the step long before had he followed his own inclinations. Indeed he had talked to me of it again and again. Now the die had been cast, as the saying is, and though I could not but admire his courage and patriotism, my heart ached for the sorrow the news of it would bring to father.

I dressed slowly, with my mind but half upon what I was doing, and went down to breakfast, wondering if Ethan would say aught to me of what had occurred the night before. He would have to be the first to speak, for I had not the hardihood to confess how I had come by a knowledge of his decision.

But Ethan made no mention of the matter and seemed much as usual, though, knowing what I did, I thought I could see he was not quite himself.

During the day a goodly quantity of provisions reached the house, evidently from farms at a distance from Elmtree; but there was considerable secrecy about the delivery, and the man who drove the waggon desired not to tarry once his load was unpacked but hurried off, without even waiting for his dinner. He had brought a letter that I guessed to be from father, albeit Aunt Nabby said naught of its contents. However, she at once set to work preparing a goodly quantity of food as if she expected a number of hungry visitors, though whom these might be I could not imagine, nor were any of us informed.

Yet it was plain enough that Aunt Nabby was much annoyed at all this mystery. While she saw

to the making of the meat pies and other pasties, her mind was no more than half upon the business in hand, and I caught her now and then murmuring to herself impatiently. "The silly politics," she burst out once, and that gave me a hint of what occupied her thoughts. But she spoke not openly, deeming it not quite ladylike for a female to meddle in such matters.

The day passed uneventfully. No guests appeared to explain Aunt Nabby's preparations, although I kept a constant lookout for them. The village seemed quieter even than usual, and there was naught to show that our life in Elmtree was not as it had always been. Nevertheless I was filled with a feeling of apprehension, as if some serious event was impending, and this worked upon me until it seemed as if every one with whom I came in contact hid a secret fear. Even Moll Butts, though she questioned me about my visit to the wise woman, was scarce as eager as I had expected, and I thought she, too, felt the dread of a calamity to come. Doubtless this was all my own imagining and Moll's lack of excitement over my adventure was but due to Aunt Nabby's "being on the war-path," as little Jimmy saucily expressed it.

We were all sent off to bed early that night, Aunt Nabby declaring she needed a good rest against the labours of the morrow. And seeing that she herself always closed the house when father was away, we

had no choice but to go; albeit Jane grumbled more than a little.

As for me, I was ready enough for my bed having been out of it a goodly part of the previous night, and scarce had my head touched the pillow than I was fast asleep in spite of my anxieties.

Several hours later I awoke to find little Jimmy beside me tugging at my arm.

"Charlotte, wake up," he whispered excitedly, "please wake up."

"What is it?" I asked, a sudden fear driving all sleepiness from my brain.

"I'm not sure," he answered. "Come and see," and he ran to the window.

I followed him and one glance at the scene below me showed all too plainly what it was and brought to mind a scrap of conversation I had heard on the road the night before between Ethan and Captain Tower. Here was the hay he had been watching for — and it was being driven into our place.

I counted the high mounds, ten dark, rounded shadows almost black in the starlight. They had come to a stop half in, half out of our enclosure, and a man on horseback was urging the waggoners to move all inside. Him I recognised. It was father, and though he commanded the men to drive the horses in they made no effort to obey.

And the cause of their inaction was plain enough. Across the Common could be heard a babble of

voices. The speakers drew nearer, shouting to each other as they ran, and there was no doubting the temper of this crowd. Almost before I realised what was happening they had reached the road and, at sight of the hay, excited cries brought a chill to my heart.

"Hay for the redcoats! Hay for King George!" was the burden of their shouts, and in a moment they had surrounded father and his party and were calling down threats of every kind upon his head. Lights flashed here and there, cries of alarm or ridicule were bandied about, and the space before our house was filled with an angry, restless throng.

Soon above the clamour rose a command for silence, and in a moment or two there was comparative quiet.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" demanded father, and I knew that if the mob had expected to frighten him, they had made a mistake. There was no lack of courage or determination in his ringing voice.

At that the din broke out again.

"Burn the hay!" some one shouted, and there was a rush to surround father who, on the instant, became the centre of a ring of lanterns. From my window I looked down upon a circle of upturned faces, while the cry of "Burn! Burn!" filled my ears.

"Silence!" came the voice of authority, and Captain Tower separated himself a little from the press

and strode nearer to father, who sat his horse calmly in the midst of the tumult.

The crowd quieted, perchance to hear the better, and the Captain spoke.

"Mr. Morton," he began courteously, "it is with deep regret that we are forced to act in this matter, but information has come to us that this hay is intended for an enemy to the American Colonies — To be plain, sir, for Gage's troops in Boston."

"Well, what of that?" father broke in angrily. "By what right —"

"Nay, sir, let me finish," Captain Tower interrupted. "Out of our old friendship for you, James Morton, we have come to buy this hay."

Evidently this offer was not more of a surprise to father than to many of the Captain's own followers, for there was much murmuring and one or two shouts of "No! No!" But among them were most of the older and more substantial men of the village, who had long held us in friendship, and though they shouted not at all, it was they who controlled the others.

I could see their strong, rugged faces lifted as they looked at their old neighbour upon his horse, and they seemed to show concern and regret, as if they pleaded in their hearts that father would not put their long friendship to too severe a test.

At the offer to buy the hay father's face, too, underwent a change. His anger disappeared. He saw plainly how easy it was to deal with these pa-

triot, who asked but for fair treatment and some consideration for their needs. He cared not for the murmurs of the hotheads, but for these solid men whose counsels and opinions he had shared in the past, he did care, and I hoped their plea would move him to give up his project. But I might have known better; for, though his voice when he spoke in answer showed that his feelings had been touched, he held firmly to his purpose.

"It is with sorrow," he said, "that I tell you I cannot sell you the hay because—" he hesitated just an instant—"because it is promised to the soldiers of your king in Boston."

Once more Captain Tower was forced to silence the crowd, and, when it had again become more orderly, an old man, Mr. Roberts by name, stepped out into the circle.

"James Morton," he began slowly, "you are an honest man, that I'll vouch for. I have known you since the day you first set foot in Elmtree, and I, and many another here, know of your goodness and charity and uprightness in this little village. If you cannot think as we do, at least I pray you take the chance we offer you to be neutral. I promise such a decision shall be respected."

For a moment there was profound quiet as if each man in that assemblage realised how much depended upon the reply father should give. And he, too, must have realized the importance of it, for it seemed a long time before he answered, and I am sure he

weighed the matter in his mind before he spoke.

"Mr. Roberts, and you other gentlemen," he began at last, "it would be vain to pretend that we can reconcile our differences by argument. I realize exactly in what position I am placed, and I thank you for the generosity and courtesy you have shown an old neighbour. It would be easier and safer for me and mine to comply with your suggestions; but, gentlemen, such considerations I cannot take into account with a clear conscience. To do so would be to show disloyalty to my king and yours, and thinking as I do, I would be a poltroon to accede. I thank you, but I cannot accept your offer."

Again for a moment or two there was silence. Then Captain Tower spoke a little sadly.

"You leave us no alternative, Mr. Morton," he said, and turning to those with him he gave an order to burn the hay.

In a twinkling the ring broke up and scattered. Groups seized the waggons, which were soon moved on to the Common. Here they were unloaded into four great heaps and the horses and wains driven out of danger. Then, at a signal, a light was set to each and soon they were ablaze from top to bottom, leaping flames rising high into the sky and lighting up the scene as in broad day.

There was scarce any sound save the fierce crackling of the burning hay. This surprised me. I had expected cheers and threats, if naught worse; but the men stood silent, thinking no doubt of what was

to come of this act of theirs. Their temper had changed. Anger had given place to sober reflection.

Just below my window father had drawn up his horse and sat immovable, looking at the spectacle without a word. Doubtless his thoughts were sad enough; not because of the burning hay but because of all it stood for. The issue had been fairly joined. What would come of it?

I stood at the window, an arm about little Jimmy as if to protect him, oblivious to the passing minutes and with never a word to say. At length, as the fire died down, the crowd began to disperse to their homes, and soon there were but a few loiterers standing about the dull-glowing heaps of burned hay.

Jimmy gave a great sigh and wriggled under my arm.

"Oh, what a fine bonfire it was!" he cried, and the sound of his childish voice brought me to myself with a start.

"A costly one for thy Dada," said father from below, looking up at us. "Now off to bed with you. There will be no more such spectacles to-night."

And Jimmy and I hurried to do his bidding.

The next morning there was naught said of the happenings of the night before. At breakfast Aunt Nabby started to speak of the dreadful waste of the fire, but father put an end to the matter gently though firmly.

"We will not discuss it, Abigail," he interrupted.

"All in this house, I am sure, are of one mind in this business, and 'tis too serious an affair to gossip over."

I dared not glance at Ethan and feared lest little Jimmy should come out with some chatter that might lead I knew not where, but the child held his peace, and the meal went on rather silently.

A little later Aunt Nabby set me to stitching on Jane's plenishing, and the day being warm and sunny, we sat on the steps of the front portico, busy as bees at our work. I rather expected my sister to express some opinion on what had happened, but I think there was naught in this world that would have taken her mind off her wedding and its arrangements. I do not know to this day whether she even saw the bonfire, as Jimmy called it, at any rate she never spoke of it to me, but talked of this kind of silk and that kind of stitchery, while her needle went in and out of the bed-gown she was broidering.

So intent were we upon our work that we noted not the quiet approach of a village child who must have come through the fields back of the house. As it was, I was not aware of his presence until he stood close beside me.

"I was to show you that," he whispered in my ear; and turning with a start I saw a small boy about the age of Jimmy, holding out his hand toward me. In the palm of it lay the brooch I had given the witch woman of Elmtree.

CHAPTER V

THE RED HAND

BUT I was not the only one who had seen the brooch in the boy's hand. Jane, too, had spied it and at once jumped to the conclusion that I had lost it.

"You careless child," she scolded, "let Aunt Abigail know that you dropped it, and you'll feel the weight of her hand."

"Don't tell on me, Jane," I coaxed, well content to let her take this view of the matter. "If you will keep the secret I will work flowers around the letters I broidered on your shift."

"I will be mum at the price," she laughed, "but give the boy something for his pains."

"Aye, at once," I answered, thankful that she had supplied me with an excuse to talk to the lad out of earshot, and in a moment I had him round the corner of the house.

"Now tell me your message," I commanded, making no effort to hide my curiosity.

"I was to bid you come at once," he replied.

"To the hut?" I asked.

"Aye," he said, nodding.

"And did you come from there?" was my next question.

"Aye," he answered again.

"But are you not feared to go there?" I exclaimed, thinking of my own experience at that dread place.

"Aye," he said for the third time, "but I like to be frightened," he went on, turning suddenly quite voluble. "You feel so proud of yourself when all's done and no hurt come to you. Beside the old witch pays good, hard money for roots and such like I gather for her. She's no so bad either. She cured my dog of a hurt leg; but good lack! she can make the shivers run up and down a body's back an she's so minded." He shuddered with delight at the recollection.

"I will go to her at once," I declared finally, giving the boy a small silver piece, for which he thanked me.

"Ye'd best not delay," he cautioned me as he went off.

But I heeded not this admonition for, though puzzle as I might I could come by no good reason for the summons, I had no thought but to obey.

Without waiting even for a head-covering I took to the fields behind the barns in order to avoid Jane, who would be ready with questions I was in no wise minded to answer, and so won to the road a goodly distance from the house. I hurried through the village, heedless of the looks cast in my direction by

those I met, who were doubtless surprised to see me hatless and in such haste, for that route saved me a good half mile, and I was anxious to reach my destination quickly.

At length, coming to the weedy path leading to the hut, I ran up it, but even in broad day I was not without a sense of fear as I knocked upon the door.

"Enter, loving heart," came the voice I knew to be the old dame's.

I went in and crossed the darkened room to the small fire before which the wise woman was seated as if, indeed, she had not stirred since my first visit. All was as I had left it, except that the cats were not to be seen.

"I am here!" I cried, holding out the brooch before her.

She turned and half snatched the trinket out of my hand, concealing it within the folds of her dress.

"Why did you send for me?" I asked breathlessly.

"The time is come," she croaked.

"The time for what?" I demanded, my anxiety getting the better of my awe.

"The time of which I warned you," she answered. "Your father is in danger."

"But why should any one harm him?" I asked, much distressed by her words. "The hay is destroyed."

"'Tis more than a matter of hay," she replied, then giving me a sharp look over her shoulder she

went on, "'Tis rumoured that your father has sent for British troops. What know you of that?"

"Naught," I returned hotly, "nor do I believe it. Why should he send for soldiers?"

"To punish those who burned the hay," she explained. "Some say, too, that the redcoats come to search for a store of powder and ball, and that one who knows will tell them where the patriots have it hid."

"Father is no informer!" I burst out.

"I do not say that he is," replied the old woman, "but he will meet the fate of one, unless he leaves Elmtree ere another sun rises."

"You are trying to fright me," I cried, though indeed her words confirmed my own forebodings.

"Nay, child," she answered, her voice softening as she looked at me, "of what use would it be to me to fright you? Nay, rely on what I tell you — and see to it that your father leaves Elmtree. War has come to these Colonies, and will soon touch here. Then a victim must be found. Who has been so staunch a Loyalist as James Morton? Him they will blame for aught that occurs, and, though I care not what happens to any Tory in the land, yet am I minded to save thy father for the sake of his daughter."

She had spoken earnestly and gently, and for the moment I forgot that she was called the witch of Elmtree and believed that, as she said, she was striving to do me a kindness.

"How will they serve him?" I murmured.
"Will they kill him?"

"Nay," she answered, "that you need not fear; but perchance he would prefer death to tar and feathers and being ridden out of town upon a rail."

"Oh, no," I protested, "they would never do that."

"Listen!" The old dame nigh screamed the word, her eyes hardening as they gazed into mine. "Listen! If you doubt me look on the other side of the road opposite your gate. There you will find proof of what I say. Think not to destroy it, for if it were thrown down an hundred times yet would it rise again. Now go! I have kept my promise. See to it that my warnings are not unheeded!"

I left the hut in haste, after a word or two of thanks to the old woman, but she paid no further heed to me, even keeping her back toward me till I was out of the house.

I hurried home, pondering upon what I had just been told and puzzling greatly over the old witch. Evidently she was a patriot who was doing what she could in her own way to further the cause. Nor was she without her kindly feelings. I had had a glimpse of them for a moment when she had spoken as might any one with a heart. I suspected that her magic fire and her restless cats were the means she employed to befool the yokels who came for love-philters as had Moll Butts; but, once she had overawed them, I could see how she might use her power

to influence some hesitating farmer who wished to favour the winning side and would throw in his lot with the patriots were he but assured that they would be victorious. In this and other ways she might do more than a man's work for her cause.

And there was no doubt about her earnestness when she warned me of father's danger; but how was I to tell him and what good would it do? He would laugh at the warning of an old witch, and scold me severely for going near her. I knew him well enough to be certain that he would scorn to run away on any such pretext, and yet I believed that the wise woman had been sincere, even though I knew not how she had come by her knowledge. However I meant to tell father and I hurried on, driven by anxiety.

Dinner was long over when at last I reached home, and little Jimmy met me at the gate.

"You're to have no mid-day meal, miss," he said, frowning portentously in imitation of Aunt Nabby, then in a whisper he added, "But Moll has left a full platter in the buttery, if you chance that way."

I started to enter the yard meaning to go direct to father, and caring little about the scolding to come, when I remembered what the old witch had said about the proof I was to find opposite the gate. I looked, but saw naught at first; then in haste I crossed the road, little Jimmy at my heels, for there, above the bushes, was a blood-red hand pointing at our house. It was mounted atop a stout post upon which

were scrawled the words, "We come in 24 hrs."

"Now who put that there?" asked Jimmy curiously. "I vow I ne'er saw it before. Is it perchance a new game?"

He scrambled up the bank and tugged at the post, but it was too firmly set for his small strength.

"Let it be, Jimmy," I said, realizing that here was the way to warn father that he must flee without saying aught of my visit to the mysterious crone. "Come with me into the house."

"You'd best see father before Aunt Nabby catches you," Jimmy cautioned as we crossed the road and walked up the foot-path toward the front door.

"Where is Ethan?" I asked, for I thought to speak to him of the matter first of all. "Was he at dinner?"

"Nay," answered the boy, "and that made Aunt Nabby all the angrier. She vows that this house loseth all order."

"Well," I said with a sigh at being forced to act without Ethan's advice, "I must to father at once, come what may. Where is he?"

"At his desk — but Aunt Nabby is there too," Jimmy told me. "Better stop first in the buttery."

But I had little interest in the meal Moll had saved for me and I felt the need to give father warning forthwith, so I went straightway to his study.

I opened the door a little shakily I confess, and at my entrance Aunt Nabby rose from her chair, holding herself very stiff and tall.



A blood-red hand pointing at our house

"Go to your room, miss, and await me there," she said with her severest manner.

"Now Aunt Nab—" I began, but she cut me short.

"Not a word!" she exclaimed.

"Nay, but Abigail," father protested mildly, at which my aunt turned her severity upon him for the moment.

"James," she declared relentlessly, "when your wife died and you asked me to care for your motherless children I stipulated that there should be no unseemly conflict of authority. Charlotte knows the rules of this house. She has transgressed them and should be punished accordingly."

"Oh, Aunt Nabby," I broke in desperately, "my punishment can wait, while I have news that cannot. Father must away at once or he will be tarred and feathered."

This silenced Aunt Nabby and brought father to his feet.

"Where heard you that, Charlotte?" he demanded.

"The house is marked," I answered, thinking he would be more influenced by the red hand than by what the witch had told me. "Come and see for yourself."

Aunt Nabby murmured something about politics, but father paid scant heed to her. Without a word he followed me to the side of the road where on the bank above us stood the post with the red hand.

"There it is, Father," I said, rather tremblingly, for the sight of the thing brought a chill to my heart. "They come in twenty-four hours."

"They think to fright me," father muttered, half under his breath, then seized with a sudden anger he ran up the embankment and wrenching loose the post, dashed it to the ground. "Do they fancy me a child to be imposed upon by such silly stuff as this!" he exclaimed, coming back to my side. "'Twill take more than a red-painted hand to drive me from Elmtree."

He strode toward the house with me at his side, but ere we turned in at the door I glanced back at the place we had left. There, shining blood-coloured in the sunlight, stood the post with its sinister emblem atop, as though it had never been disturbed.

"Father!" I cried, clutching his arm, "look! It is there again."

He turned and gazed across the road, standing silent for a moment as if he could scarce believe his eyes, then with a suddenness that startled me he shook his fist violently.

"Tricks! Tricks!" he muttered and went swiftly indoors. I followed and Aunt Nabby met us in the study.

"What is it?" she asked. "More of your silly politics?"

"Aye, silly enough," answered father angrily. "These yokels plan to terrify me into leaving Elm-

tree. But I'll not go! I'll ask the King for protection if they threaten violence."

"'Tis a long road to London, James," Aunt Nabby remarked, with her cold common sense. "Did the King save thy hay?" at which I saw father shrink a little.

"And what could you do, Father, against so many?" I pleaded, for indeed I would have given much to see him go.

"There are others who are loyal," he replied.

"Not in this country side," Aunt Abigail retorted, shaking her cap. "I know no Tory here that I would trust. You'd better to Boston till this blows over."

"Nay," father insisted, "say no more of the matter. I shall not go, and there is an end to it."

With a feeling of helplessness I glanced out of the window and saw Ethan coming toward the house. Giving a sigh of relief I hurried out to him, for I wanted mightily to ask his advice. If father, as he seemed, was determined not to leave Elmtree I wondered if it were not my duty to tell him all the old witch woman had said.

I met my brother at the gate and saw on the instant that he, too, was anxious, for his face was serious and there was no laughing shout for me as was usual.

"Look, Ethan," I said, pointing to the red hand. He saw it and shook his head sorrowfully.

"I expected it," he answered. "Father must go away at once."

"So I have told him; but he will not go, Ethan."

"He must," my brother said positively. "He must. 'Tis rumoured that redcoats have been sent for, and if he is here when they arrive naught can save him from violence. He must be away before they reach here."

We had started for the house when a hail sounded along the road and brought us to a stop. Toward us came Gregory, our bond-servant, reeling and lurching forward as if he were in sore pain. We ran to him in haste.

"What is it?" cried Ethan as we reached him.

"The redcoats are coming," he panted, and fell into Ethan's arms nigh fainting.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEAT OF THE DRUMS

FOR the time I thought only of poor Gregory and his hurts. His face was bruised and swollen, his clothes muddied and he was in a sorry state; but his weakness was only momentary, being due to shortness of breath from hard running. In an instant he was himself again.

“Out with your news, man,” said Ethan in a low tense voice which showed me how serious he thought it. “How came you in this condition?”

“I’ve been beat,” Gregory answered bitterly. “I fell in with a swarm of bloody-backs. They caught me a mile or so from the village and tried to make me tell them the way hither, but I feigned simple and in the end they let me go.”

“How many are there?” demanded Ethan eagerly.

“About two hundred,” replied Gregory, “and they must come soon. I tried to confuse them by changing the signs at the crossroads, so mayhap they may go down into Sandy Hollow, but ’twill do no good in the end. They must reach here ere long. There’s time yet to get the master away, Mr. Ethan,” he went on earnestly. “It will go hard with him

else, for it has been whispered that he writ for the soldiers. We must save him. Though I can't hold with his opinions in politics, he's been a kind master and I would grieve sore an he were hurt. He must be got away at once, Mr. Ethan."

"But the sign on the red hand gave him twenty-four hours," I protested obstinately.

"Aye, miss, but that was when they little thought the bloody-backs were so near," Gregory told me. "Once they come, there'll be no warnings. He must go at once, miss."

"Alas, he will not go, Gregory," I answered.

"But he must, Charlotte," Ethan declared, turning as if to enter the house.

"Wait, Ethan," I said, laying a hand upon his arm. "What will you tell father?"

"The truth," he answered proudly.

"And think you he will go away if he knows the British troops are coming?" I replied. "Nay, he will stay and claim their protection."

"The worst thing he could do." Yet Ethan hesitated, as well he might.

"He must be got away," Gregory murmured insistently. "Try what you can do, Miss Charlotte. Try! For none can stop harm coming to the master once the fight is on. And there'll be a fight when the British come. Be sure o' that."

I was at my wits' end.

"Will not the redcoats be his best protection, Ethan?" I asked at last.

"Nay," he answered, "what would they care for one Provincial? Whig or Tory, 'tis a small matter to them. And they will have no time to look after father, even had they the willingness. 'Twill be all they can do to look after themselves.—I know not what to do!"

Even as he spoke the roll of drums sounded in the distance, and we looked at each other in dismay. The redcoats were coming.

"Here they are," whispered Gregory in an awed tone, and as if moved by a common impulse we all hurried to the road.

There, scarce half a mile away, was the front rank of a British company, their scarlet uniforms shining bravely in the sunlight.

With a shudder I glanced at the wooden hand across the way. It, too, carried the red sign of war.

But hardly had we recovered from the shock of hearing the British drums than we were startled by another sound equally alarming. The bell of the village church began to toll violently, and almost upon the first stroke men came running from all directions, to assemble on the common in front of us. So swiftly had the usual quiet of the sleepy little town been altered that it struck terror to my heart.

Gregory was the first to recover his wits.

"I'm off to join the company," he cried, and forgetting his bruises, he darted toward the common at top speed. I looked at Ethan dreading what I guessed would be his action.

"Go you to father," he said, quietly. "I must take my place with the others who mean to defend the village."

"Must you, Ethan?" I pleaded, knowing all the while that there was no other road open to him; but he stayed not to answer and hurried off in the wake of Gregory.

With a sinking heart I ran into the house and, going to the study, found father and Aunt Nabby standing by the window looking up the road.

"Here are your king's troops, James," exclaimed Aunt Nabby, joyfully. "Now you can have protection, and I warrant you're glad to see them."

"Nay," answered father with a note of deep sadness in his voice, "I think I never looked on a sorer sight in all my life. See you not, Abigail, what is going on on the common?"

Aunt Nabby turned and saw the rapidly formed line of minute men.

"Oh, but they'll not fight the British," she exclaimed confidently.

"I would that I were as sure," father returned, shaking his head, as he turned away from the window. "If there is an exchange of shots the whole country will be aflame. 'Tis not troops that are needed to settle this quarrel."

"Nonsense," protested Aunt Nabby, "they'll never fight!" Then, turning, she caught sight of me. "Where's Jimmy?" she demanded.

I had no idea where the boy was, but seeing that I

could be of no use there, and also being glad of something to do, I hailed her question with a sort of relief.

"I'll find him, Aunt Nabby," I answered, and started off at once to hunt for him.

Within the house none had seen him, and I hurried to the barn. But here also was the same tale, and of a sudden I began to be anxious, knowing that the child was afraid of naught and ever ready for an adventure. This reasoning led me to the conclusion that in all probability he was out upon the common, where, in the hurry and confusion, he would be unnoticed.

Arguing thus I ran toward the village green with all speed, fearful that some harm might befall the boy, and soon I found myself in the midst of an anxious throng.

Nor was I the only female there. Mothers, wives and sisters of the minute men were on every hand, watching with anxious eyes the two thin lines drawn up at attention in the centre of the green field. For a moment I stayed to look for Ethan. There he stood with the others, and I knew not whether my pride in his courage equalled the fear I had of what might happen to the brother I loved so dearly. But the issue lay not with me. I was but one maid among many, who at such times must hide their suffering to hearten those who fight for them.

Captain Tower, shouting his orders, strode up and down in front of his company, commanding the peo-

ple to fall back. And soon the women, children, and elders of the village were assembled to one side, but well within earshot of all that passed. It was among this crowd that I found Jimmy, who was dancing about in an ecstasy of excitement.

"Oh, Charlotte!" he cried as I reached him, "the redcoats are here and we shall beat them."

"You must come home at once," I declared, grasping his shoulder and pulling him toward the opposite side of the green. But he held back.

"Nay, Charlotte, I want to see the fun," he protested, being but a child.

"Come!" I insisted, dragging him to the front of the knot of people. "There's no time to argue the matter."

But I was too late, for of a sudden there came a hush upon the assembly and the beating of drums sounded sharply on my ears. I looked up to see the British soldiers march into the square and stopped where I was, not daring to cross the space between the two companies. There I stayed through all that followed, one hand holding that of little Jimmy, scarce conscious of myself at all but fascinated by the scene before me.

An officer on horseback led the British, and it was plain that he was surprised to see the sturdy militia awaiting him, for he pulled up his beast and gave a command which brought his men to a standstill. Another order formed them into a line facing our

defenders; this done he spurred his horse forward to where Captain Tower was standing.

As he reined up he saluted formally and our captain raised his hand in acknowledgment.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked the British officer, haughtily indicating the company with his sword. "If it be a friendly reception, well and good; but, although I thought the bells were ringing in our honour, I cannot get it out of my head that there is a something hostile in your bearing. I hope I am mistaken."

"That will depend entirely upon yourself," replied Captain Tower. "We're not used to seeing the military, and perchance we are in ignorance of the proper ceremony. When we learn the reason for your visit we shall know better how to act."

There was naught of graciousness in Captain Tower's speech. He was an old soldier who had fought in the French and Indian wars, and doubtless having made up his mind that a fight was inevitable, he had no inclination to conciliate his enemy.

And his manner seemed to irritate the other extremely.

"A fig for what you think or know!" he rapped out. "'Tis your place to be respectful to the representatives of His Majesty's government without asking what their business is. I doubt not you need a lesson in manners — and trust me, you've come to the right man for it. I'll have none of your airs and

talk of rights. Disperse your silly militia, or my men shall do it to a tune you'll be far from liking."

"Nay, not so fast," retorted Captain Tower. "We know well enough what you are after. 'Tis not the first hunt of the kind in these Colonies, but let me tell you, so that there shall be no mistake wherein the responsibility for trouble lies, we defend our own. No king nor king's soldiers shall steal from us without a struggle."

I guessed that in this Captain Tower was referring to the powder and ball rumoured to have been hidden by the patriots; but the British officer evidently knew naught of this and hit upon another meaning.

"Oh, ho!" he cried angrily, "you call it stealing to take criminals and give them their just deserts? 'Tis a fine lawless idea, and as for the responsibility, 'twill be on your own heads if trouble comes. Here now is the gist of the matter. Attend well for I shall not repeat myself. We were sent from Providence to escort some hay into Boston, where it is greatly needed by His Majesty's soldiers. A Mr. Morton of your village engaged to procure it, but so hostile have you Provincials become that it was burned. Now, lacking the hay, we have come for the ruffians who fired it, in order that they may explain to General Gage the meaning of their actions. There you have it. I came for hay. Failing that I must take back those who destroyed it. One or the other I must and shall have."

“And we will give you neither,” answered Captain Tower. At this point several elders of the village, seeing no immediate danger of a conflict, stepped forward and took the matter out of the Captain’s hands.

Here indeed I might have escaped to our house, but I and those around me were too breathlessly interested in the scene before us to think of moving.

Our old minister, Mr. Carrington, was the foremost of the men trying to compromise the matter. He spoke the British captain fairly and courteously, but there was no good excuse that could be offered for the burning of the hay. It was an act of defiance, and it was soon apparent that one side or the other must yield.

But the English officer stood his ground.

“The men or the hay,” he reiterated, yet neither could he get, for to give up those who had a hand in that business would mean all the young men of the village and many of the older ones as well.

The parley lasted but a short time. It soon became evident to the British captain that although they spoke with more consideration they were no whit less determined to thwart him than was Captain Tower.

“Now for the last time, I ask you to deliver to me the men who burned the hay!” he cried angrily.

“Sir, I beg you to consider,” faltered Mr. Carrington.

“I have considered to no purpose,” answered the

officer. "'Tis for you to consider now, and I give you five minutes by the watch after I rejoin my troop. At the end of that time you will either disperse in order that I may take such measures as I see fit, or we shall fire. And if blood is shed 'twill be upon your own stubborn heads for resisting the authority of your king."

With that he wheeled his horse and galloped off to his men. Once there he took out his watch so that all could see and began to count the minutes aloud.

Realising that nothing further could be done Mr. Carrington spoke to Captain Tower.

"The issue is now in your hands, Captain," murmured the old minister. "God grant that what you are resolved to do may bear good fruit," and he raised his eyes to the heavens as if in prayer.

"Gentlemen, you will fall back," commanded Captain Tower in a businesslike voice, and the group of elders moved away, all save Mr. Carrington.

"You, too, Mr. Carrington," said the Captain after a moment. He spoke gently for he, as well as all in the village, loved the old man. "You can do no good now, sir," he added.

"I shall not go back," Mr. Carrington announced in a strong voice. "Although I shall not fight, yet may I bare my breast to the bullets of our oppressors and so perchance take the place of a younger man who can do more for his country than a worn-out,

weary old parson. If blood is shed again, Captain, more must follow ere America is freed."

His last words rang out prophetically and with a firm step he walked to where the company stood and took his stand at one end of the line facing the British soldiers. Captain Tower followed protesting.

"But you have no place here, Mr. Carrington," he insisted.

"Aye, but I have a place," the old man said. "Your company has lacked a chaplain heretofore. It has one now."

And Captain Tower with a shrug of his shoulders took his position in front of the line.

"Two minutes gone!" the British officer announced, and an ominous hush fell upon the scene.

CHAPTER VII

COUNTING THE MINUTES

THE little group of villagers among whom Jimmy and I stood seemed scarce to breathe, so silent were they. We were placed out of range of gun-fire and there we remained, terror-stricken, waiting for the tragedy to come. The British captain, watch in hand, sat his motionless horse, counting the minutes, while the scarlet line of regular troops confronted our minute men.

At the windows and doors of the houses surrounding the common I could see the forms of women, and it needed little imagination to picture their anxious faces gazing with loving eyes upon a husband or a son standing erect in the ranks of our defenders.

All was strangely quiet. No birds sang nor dog barked. Even the wind had fallen, and not a leaf stirred upon the trees. It was like the ominous hush before a thunderstorm, only the dread of what might happen was a thousand times worse.

“Three minutes gone!”

The words floated clearly across the green, to be followed at once by the murmur of low sobs from

those about me, and for an instant my heart stopped its beating.

I looked at the British officer and was surprised to find a smile upon his lips. He was young and rather boyish in appearance, not at all the sort of man who would take any joy in killing his fellows — and yet he smiled. Could it be that he did not realize the determination of those who opposed him? Did he expect that our men would give up at the last moment? That they were only half in earnest and that at the end they would not dare to fight against the regular soldiers of England?

Perhaps that was what his smile indicated, but, oh, I thought, if only some one could make him understand that every man in the Elmtree militia was ready to die for his country.

“Four minutes gone!”

To our ears the voice of the man upon the horse sounded like a funeral knell. I heard near me some one weeping and to my right a frail woman clinging to the arm of an old man gazed out across the field to where her young husband stood, while the tears flowed unheeded down her haggard face. But there was no word uttered. A good courage was not confined to those who filled the ranks. The little group of watchers showed equal fortitude that day, as they stood there awaiting the moment of sacrifice.

Of a sudden Captain Tower gave a command and those in the front rank of our lines kneeled down so that the men behind might have free play for their

guns. There was no mistaking the meaning of this move, and it evidently surprised the British officer, for he straightened in his saddle and the smile left his lips. Then he called his second in command, who, after a whispered talk with his superior, went among the English with a word to them here and there. Again the Captain straightened and looked grimly at the time-piece in his hand.

Finally with a gesture of resolution he put his watch in his pocket and, drawing his sword, spurred his horse a little way toward the waiting line of Provincials.

"The five minutes are gone!" he cried. "For the last time — I charge you — lay down your arms and disperse!"

He paused, waiting to see if his behest would be obeyed; but his only reply was the quiet injunction of Captain Tower to his men not to fire first.

"Very well!" cried the British officer. "Very well! The consequences be upon your own heads!" And with that he galloped back to his own lines. Then with lifted sword he gave the word that brought the muskets of his soldiers to their shoulders.

"Take aim!" he cried, and his lieutenant echoed the words.

Like a well-oiled machine the redcoats levelled their guns, and we waited with held breath for the next command.

I watched the British captain, seemingly unable to

drag my eyes from his face, and saw him open his lips to speak the fatal word. But, ere it was uttered, a loud shout attracted his attention.

"Stop! Stop!" was the startling cry. "I charge you hold your fire!" And there, between the two rows of levelled muskets stood father. For an instant he remained motionless, a commanding figure facing the British, tall and upright, with one hand held high above his head. At the moment I had no realization of his danger. To me he seemed suddenly to have grown larger, as if indeed he had become a bulwark for our men against the bullets of the British. Tears of thankfulness came into my eyes, for so firm was my faith in him that I felt sure that now all would be made right.

But the British captain had no such thought.

"Out of the way! Out of the way!" he shouted. "Do you wish to be killed?"

"There shall be no killing," answered father in a ringing voice. "I am James Morton, His Majesty's faithful servant, and I command you, bid your men to lower their muskets."

For a moment the officer hesitated, then glad, perchance to avoid the shedding of blood, and knowing that father had procured the hay and was a firm Loyalist, he gave the order to lower the guns and rode out between the lines to parley with the man who, in the nick of time, had stopped the firing.

"What mean you, sir?" he began blusteringly,

doubtless unready that any should think he was willing to shirk a task that came his way.

"It means," father answered, "that though I am a loyal subject of His Majesty, King George, I am also a citizen of this Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, and I shall not stand by and see my neighbours shot down. Once your bullets are loosed the whole country will be plunged into war."

"Oh, ho! War!" cried the Captain derisively. "Who is there to make war upon us? A thousand troops would clear the country of such a rabble as these in thirty days," and he made a gesture of contempt toward our militia. "But this has naught to do with the matter of the hay, Mr. Morton," he went on. "I have information that it was burned, and have come for the culprits. In face of this your neighbours have seen fit to take up arms against their king and will not disperse."

"Nay, I think they will if the facts are made clear," answered father. "Come, we will speak with them." And he moved across the common to where we were standing, followed by the British officer.

The elders of the village hurried to meet them. 'Twas easy to see that the nearness of disaster had brought terror to all hearts, and they were more than ready to meet father halfway, Loyalist though he was. Mr. Carrington stepped from the ranks and joined the group, while we children, moved by curiosity, crept nearer with the others until a half

circle was formed about those few who spoke for all.

"My friends," father began, "the Captain tells me that your company is in arms against the King. This I cannot believe, and I look for another explanation of the matter."

"'Tis not against the King we stand," Mr. Roberts answered, "but to protect our rights."

"But the hay was burned, and you refused to give up those who did it!" the Captain broke in.

"Aye, that is true," rejoined Mr. Roberts, "for we know of naught that should give you the right to them. If a wrong has been done we have our own courts of justice to punish the offenders. If James Morton makes a complaint it will be considered fairly and before the law."

"I'm no barrister to argue such matters," cried the Englishman; "all I know is that some ruffians have burned the King's hay. It is my duty to capture them. Their punishment is no concern of mine. That will be determined by General Gage in Boston. But think not to befool me. I am well aware that all of you were involved, and that it is for that reason you have taken up arms to protect those who actually lighted the fire. I have no wish to shed blood but I have a duty to perform."

"Nay," interrupted father sharply, "you have no duties here, if it is on the King's behalf you come."

"On whose else should I come?" demanded the puzzled officer. "The hay was the King's, and —"

"There you are wrong," father broke in. "The hay was mine. If any one has sustained damage it is I. Therefore your contention falls, for none here has interfered with the King's rights in this matter."

At this there was a murmur of pleased surprise among the villagers, for here, truly, was an untying of the knot they had got themselves tangled in.

"Then why sent you for the soldiers, James Morton?" came the whining voice of Sam Dodge, the shoemaker, whose curiosity would never let him hold his tongue.

"*I* send for the soldiers—" father began, but he stopped suddenly, a flush of anger coming into his face. For a moment he stood silent, looking from one to another of his old friends as if expecting them to speak; but all held their peace. At length, throwing up his head proudly, he turned to the British captain again.

"May I ask, sir, how you came by the news that the hay was burned?" he said.

"'Twas brought to us by one of our men who was sent on ahead to reconnoitre," the officer replied. "He was a witness to all that happened, and hearing naught from you, which seemed strange to me, I came on to-day to investigate for myself."

That was father's answer to the accusation that he had sent for the troops; but he made no reference to it then.

"You have exceeded your instructions, sir," he said. "You were ordered to await the hay several

miles below the village. There was no command that you should come here."

The British captain flushed angrily.

"I was told that you were loyal — that I might count upon James Morton to any extent!" he burst out wrathfully.

"His Majesty has no more loyal subject in his kingdom," cried father at the top of his voice, "but, sir, 'tis not dulling the keen edge of that loyalty to try and save this colony to the Crown. If you have come here on the matter of my hay, Captain, your errand has been a useless one. What damage I have sustained needs not force of arms to redress it. Therefore I beg that you will take your men back whence they came and report that I have failed in my endeavour to secure the hay I promised General Gage."

"Very well," answered the Englishman, much put about by this way of closing the matter. "I shall report what you have said and done, but I doubt if it will make your welcome the more cordial when next you go to Boston Town."

And with that he rode off to his troops, and in a few moments the redcoats were in motion with their backs turned on Elmtree.

It was a silent and much relieved group of people who watched them depart, and Mr. Carrington, softly, as if to himself, said a short prayer of thankfulness that found an echo in every heart within sound of his voice. Then he and all of father's

old neighbours crowded forward to where father stood a little apart.

"Your hand, James Morton," exclaimed Mr. Roberts. "Whig or Tory, you are an honest man and all in this village are your debtors."

"Nay," said father, drawing back, "there can be no more friendship between us. A few days gone my child was refused food in your market because she was the daughter of a Loyalist. This morning a red hand pointed at my door with a warning that I must leave the town ere another sun had set. I was to be driven out else. Now, when I am accused of sending for the King's soldiers, not one voice is lifted in my defence. Nay, nay! How can there be friendship between us? I shall go to Boston. Though my welcome is like to be harsh, as you have heard, I cannot stay here longer."

"Nay, do not go!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington. "Stay with us, James Morton, and hold what views you please. Your work this day has given you that right, and we shall see that you are not molested further."

"And would you have me do naught?" asked father in a firm voice. "Think you I have no affection for this country that I could see it ravaged with war and not raise a hand to stop it? You believe that because I am loyal to the King I have no regard for this land that has been my home. 'Tis not true! I love it with all my heart, and would lay down my life willingly rather than that it should

be torn asunder in a bloody strife. Is there no way of settling our differences except by fighting? Must men be killed — must misery and starvation harry us because there are stubborn leaders on both sides? God forbid that I should not do my utmost to ease the friction between you. See to it that you on your part are not stiff-necked and too ready to take up your muskets. I leave you to your duty as you see it. I am loyal to my king but I shall do my utmost to bring peace to this sorely troubled country."

He stopped, his head lifted high and his eyes flashing as he faced them. Then catching sight of me and of little Jimmy, perhaps for the first time, he held out a hand to us.

"Come, daughter," he said, with a sad shake of his head. "Come. We are among the King's enemies and must be gone."

And so, taking my hand in his, he led us across the common toward our home.

CHAPTER VIII

JANE WEDS THE DOCTOR

IT was not until we had nigh reached the house that I began to realize the full meaning of father's words to the people on the common. Now that danger no longer threatened him he had determined to leave Elmtree. What it was that had changed him so of a sudden I did not discern; but I was sure it was no whim or spirit of contrariness; and my feelings, too, had undergone a change. Since the red hand was no longer a menace I was as eager that he should stay as I had been anxious to have him heed the warning. It seemed to me that our home was the safest place for him, and his decision to visit Boston at this time troubled me mightily.

"Are you really going away, Father?" I asked, as we entered the gate.

"Yes, my child," he answered, very sorrowfully I thought.

"But must you go?"

"Aye, that I must," he replied. "I see now I should have been away long ere this, but I thought to do my work for the King in my home. Alas,

we cannot call it that any more! We must all leave Elmtree to seek a new abiding place."

"All of us?" I gasped, scarce understanding.

"Aye, all of us," he declared. "Think you, Charlotte, my dear, that I would willingly leave my loyal children among the enemies of their king? Never!" and with that he passed into the house, while his words rang in my brain.

"His loyal children!"

Evidently father had been too wrought upon by the nearness of a tragedy to take note of Ethan, standing in the ranks of that brave little band of Provincials. Nor, seemingly, had it ever entered his head that any of us could differ from him on such a matter, and the time was come when all must be made plain.

"Poor father!" I thought. "Poor dear father! It will come nigh to breaking his heart when he learns what the opinions of his children really are."

As I led Jimmy into the house, father was calling for Aunt Abigail who came bustling down the stairs, talking excitedly. We children followed her into the study where she began to upbraid him for the risk he had taken in going between the lines.

"'Twas a most foolhardy thing to do, James," she ended, "and you gained naught by it. Your brave British soldiers went off without firing a shot."

"We will not discuss that, Abigail," father replied quietly. "We are all leaving Elmtree as soon as the necessary preparations can be made."

"Leave Elmtree! All of us!" echoed Aunt Nabby, looking at him aghast. "Are you gone crazed, James?"

"Nay," answered father patiently; "but I have work to do in Boston and I do not choose to leave my family among hostile neighbours. There is no time to argue the matter. My mind is made up. So please hurry with your arrangements. The house can be left to the care of Gregory and —"

"No, that it cannot," Aunt Nabby interrupted vigorously. "I have naught to do with your politics. I leave such foolishness to the men — and I stay here!"

"That is as you will, Abigail," father replied with a shrug of his shoulders. "I cannot think that any harm will come to you through your opinions. But my children go with me. Jimmy," he continued, addressing the small boy at my side, "run, please, and tell Jane I should like to see her here at once."

My little brother scurried off upon his errand, but ere he had gone farther than the hall, we heard Jane hastening down the stairs, and a moment later the voice of Dr. Isaac Jones, to whom she was to be wedded, as she opened the door to him.

"'Tis a sickly season, Jane," Dr. Isaac cried cheerily, as he greeted his lady-love. "There are two new cases of measles and I have also accepted an invitation to inoculate a party against the small-pox. We gather to-night at Mr. Fielding's country

house. It is for that reason I have come thus early to bid you good-bye till I return."

They entered the study as he ended, and father greeted him cordially, for he liked Jane's lover, though to my thinking, the doctor was far from romantical, having ever some prosy speech about his patients upon his lips.

"You come in the nick of time, Isaac," father exclaimed, grasping the doctor's hand. "Though I fear my news will not rejoice you, yet it must be told. I and my children leave for Boston at once to remain until the unhappy differences between the Crown and these colonies have been adjusted. I trust it will not be for long."

Jane uttered no word, but I saw her eyes open wide with surprise and dismay. Dr. Isaac shook his head perplexedly, as he might over a puzzling case of illness.

"I think, sir," he said after a moment, peering at father through his horn-rimmed glasses; "I think you exaggerate the necessity for your leaving Elm-tree. I've heard much talk of this matter among my patients and —"

"I'm not leaving because I'm afraid," father broke in. "Not at all, but I must do what seems my duty without regard to my own comfort, and I do not care to leave my children to suffer because their father is loyal to the King."

"There is no danger of that, sir," Dr. Isaac remarked slowly, for he was most deliberate in his

speech. "I judge rightly, I think, when I say that your neighbours are not unfriends with you, but with your king."

"*Your* king!" echoed father, emphasising the first word and looking fixedly at the doctor. "*Your* king! Why do you not say '*Our* king'? Or would you have me understand that he has ceased to be your king?"

I think the doctor was a little taken a-back at father's vehemence; but he stood by his beliefs, and I liked him better than ever I had before.

"I call no man my king, Mr. Morton," he said, "who permits his Ministers to enslave free men. They tax us unlawfully; they take away our judges; and they have turned the guns of their soldiers upon us. George the Third ceased to be my king when his troops shot down the farmers of Lexington."

Father looked at Dr. Isaac in astonishment, as if he could scarce believe his ears; then I saw anger gather in his eyes as he gazed at the younger man before him.

"Have I harboured a traitor in this house?" he muttered, half to himself.

"Nay, sir —" the doctor began, but father broke in furiously.

"Stop!" he thundered. "You shall not utter treason before my children! Out of my house and come not in again! Think you I will permit a daughter of mine to marry a traitor to his king?"

For an instant there was silence in the room;

then Jane taking a step nearer Dr. Isaac, faced father resolutely.

"I cannot speak for the rest of your children, sir," she began, "but for myself let me tell you that I, too, am what you are pleased to call a traitor; and if Isaac leaves this house never to return again I go with him — an he will take me."

My eyes were fixed upon father as Jane spoke and I saw in his face first surprise and then sorrow. My heart ached for him I loved best in all the world. And yet never had I admired Jane so much as at that moment. It had not been her way to express aught of what she felt. I was surprised that her opinions were so firmly fixed.

Dr. Isaac put an arm about Jane, a mute signal that he appreciated her support, though his brow was wrinkled as if the situation perplexed him. Father stared at them for a moment, at first overwhelmed by Jane's revelation, then his stern expression gave place to a look of surprise.

"'Tis scarce believable that one of my children should turn against the King," he said, in a voice quiet enough, though tense with suppressed emotion. "Doubtless I have to thank you for this, Isaac," he went on, bitterly, "but seeing that the matter is accomplished I must make the best of it. You can come to Boston for her when the times are more settled."

"Nay, that will never do," Jane whimpered. "'Tis ill luck to postpone a wedding, and my dress

is made and all my linen ready. I do not want the wedding put off."

"But it can take place in Boston as well as here," father insisted. "I can surely arrange for Isaac to enter the city."

"Aye,—but can I get out again?" remarked the doctor thoughtfully. "I've many sick and more sickening—how can I go away? In duty to those who depend upon me, I dare not risk it."

Jane at this began to sob openly and though Dr. Isaac tried to comfort her she would not listen to reason. She begged father not to insist upon taking her to Boston; and he, in his turn desired to be present at her wedding.

"Can you not wait till after our marriage?" Dr. Isaac asked father.

"Nay, that I will not do," father answered positively. "The business upon which I go, may not be sacrificed to any personal desire. If Jane will not accompany me, then indeed I must forego the gratification of seeing her married."

"Sure I never heard it was ill-luck to hasten a wedding," I suggested. "Why cannot they be wedded at once? All is ready."

I saw Jane's face light up and knew she would agree.

"'Tis the very thing," cried father gladly. "There is one among us who keeps her head. Fetch Mr. Carrington, Isaac, and we will have him marry you forthwith."

But here a new difficulty presented itself.

"You forget that I must go to the inoculation to-night," Dr. Isaac protested hesitatingly.

"If you do not want me," Jane declared, with a toss of her head, "I shall go to Boston with father,—and perhaps I'll wed an officer in Mr. Gage's family."

I vow I liked her spirit.

"Nay now, Jane," stammered the doctor, "you know it is not that I do not want you; but that I must to the Fielding's for the inoculation."

"Aye, you said that before," snapped Jane.

"But you seem not to understand," he persisted. "I would not leave you alone,—yet I have promised to attend the party and all arrangements have been made. A doctor must do his duty."

"You can take her with you," I put in, made bold by the reception my previous suggestion had met with.

"Aye, and why not?" asked father. "'Twill be a new sort of wedding junket, I'll admit; but 'twill be the best way out of our difficulty."

And so it was finally arranged. Dr. Isaac went off for the pastor, Jane hurried upstairs to don her wedding-gown, and Aunt Nabby bustled about to make what preparations she might in the limited time at her disposal.

"Where is Ethan?" asked father, looking at me. "Know you where he is? He should be here, not

only for his sister's marriage but also to make ready against our journey."

"Is he to go, too, Father?" I asked.

"To be sure he is. Run and see if you can find him," was the answer and with Jimmy beside me I hurried away.

We went to the common, but by this time the crowd had dispersed and I knew not where else to seek. None had seen him, though I asked several old friends; so, when at length I spied Mr. Carrington and the doctor enter our gate I hurried back, a little sad that Ethan would miss Jane's wedding, yet also somewhat glad that the moment of father's bitterest disappointment was to be put off.

But I wanted to see Ethan before he faced father, in order to warn him of what was coming and perhaps to find a solution for our difficulties, if that indeed were possible.

I reported that I could find no trace of my brother and it was agreed that they should delay a little for him; but the time slipped by and at length Dr. Isaac could stand it no longer.

"'Tis impossible to wait another moment," he insisted. "I must be at Fairchild's farm by six and 'tis a good two hours' drive away."

So the bride was sent for and came down, looking lovely in her white paduasoy, even though the blossoms in her hair were but common flowers from our own garden.

She and Dr. Brown stood before old Mr. Car-

rington, who had baptised them both when they were babes; and happily, just before the final words were said, Ethan slipped quietly into the room.

I watched him as he took a place opposite me and was startled to see how much older he looked. His face was quite pale, his lips set, and no one who knew what I did could doubt he was moved by some high purpose. To me he was very handsome, although he was but dressed in his everyday clothes.

The short ceremony was soon over. The health of the bride was hastily drunk, and in another minute they were in the doctor's chaise and away, followed by a shower of rice and an old slipper that Aunt Abigail had provided, though indeed she professed scorn of all such superstitious beliefs.

Ethan and I ran to the gate, calling good wishes after the happy pair, and on our way back I whispered to him of what was coming.

"I, too, am for Boston," he answered gravely.

"With us, Ethan?" I exclaimed joyfully.

"Nay," he replied, shaking his head. "I go a different route. A party of us have determined to join General Washington's army."

"Oh, Ethan!" I murmured, halting in my tracks. "You will be killed!"

"Do not be too sure of that," he remarked, with an attempt at light-heartedness. "I shall get behind a tree when the British bullets are flying. But come," he went on gravely, "I must tell father what I fear will grieve him sorely."

“Is there no way to spare him?” I asked brokenly. “Must he learn that all his children are rebels?”

“Aye, he must be told, Charlotte,” Ethan answered sadly, “though I would cut off my right hand to spare him the pain of it. Come,” and together we walked into the house.

CHAPTER IX

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THAT father would be sorry to learn that I, too, was a rebel against his king I knew well enough; but then, I was but a maid. It was from Ethan that the bitterest blow must fall. Not that he loved his girls less, for he cared for us all, but it was natural that the opinions of his eldest son should have more weight with him.

Moreover, in the last year or two father had grown to depend upon Ethan in his business affairs, and it was almost as if they had become partners in such enterprises. So it was that they had drawn closer the one to the other; and such was father's confidence in him that I knew he had never questioned Ethan's loyalty for a moment. Thus would the shock be all the harder and I trembled at the outcome as little Jimmy, Ethan and I walked into father's study.

Aunt Nabby was there, and evidently father had been pressing her to accompany him to Boston, for she was talking volubly against the plan.

"Nay, I shall not move a foot," she was saying. "This Boston is no doubt filled with racketing soldiery and far from quiet. I am neither Whig nor

Tory. I know naught of such matters and care less. Furthermore there are important things here for me to attend to. Only yesterday I set out some geranium slips, and who will care for them an I go away?"

"But Abigail, would you leave the children?" father pleaded, while he busied himself arranging some papers at his desk so that his back was to us.

"I would not!" she answered. "'Tis the children who are leaving me. A sensible man would give them into my charge in the circumstances. Sure, there is no danger here. Am I not right, Ethan?"

At her appeal father looked over his shoulder with a smile of welcome for us, but still busied himself at his desk.

"You do not understand, Abigail," he said, with a great show of patience. "It is not that I fear bodily harm will come to them if they remain, but already they have been made to feel as if they were outcasts because they are loyal to the King."

"Nonsense!" declared Aunt Nabby.

"Nay, it is not nonsense," father protested. "You know how Charlotte was treated in the market. Moreover I do not care to have them subject to the influence of these Whigs, as you call them. You see how Jane has changed. Charlotte and little Jimmy are but children, and might be won away from their allegiance did they hear naught but the rantings of these rebels. I will not leave them, and you had best come too, Abigail."

"Nay, it is impossible," Aunt Nabby declared. "Were it not for these slips I might consider it; but as it is — No, I shall stay!"

"Cannot you persuade your aunt, Ethan?" father asked over his shoulder.

"Nay, Father, I think Aunt Abigail is right," was the firm answer.

"Ah, I see you belittle the influence of these traitors, Ethan," father replied. "That is a mistake. You will be surprised and grieved, as I was, to learn that your sister Jane, whom I thought a well-disposed and loyal girl, has turned against her king."

"Nay, I'm not surprised," said Ethan, steadily, and the seriousness of his manner arrested father's attention.

"You knew it and did naught to make her think rightly?" he questioned.

"How could I, seeing that I hold to the same views?" replied Ethan.

For an instant father remained motionless, bending over his desk; then he turned deliberately and looked full into Ethan's face.

"The same views," he repeated slowly, as if he scarce took in the meaning of the words. "The same views! What are you saying, Ethan?"

"Oh, Father!" cried Ethan, his voice trembling with the sorrow he felt, "how can I tell you?"

It was a full minute that father gazed at Ethan before he spoke again. He seemed not to under-

stand and turned from one to the other of us as if seeking an explanation.

"Ethan," he began finally, getting to his feet, "what is it you mean?"

"Is it not plain what I mean, Father?" Ethan burst out, nigh beside himself with the pain and sorrow he was causing. "I have deceived you, sir, because I wanted to spare you."

"Then you, too, are a traitor to your king!" father murmured in a dull, lifeless tone. "You, my eldest son, a — a — traitor!"

"Call it what name you like, Father," Ethan cried in a broken voice, scarce able to control himself. "If to fight for our rights as free men is to be a traitor — then I am one."

At that little Jimmy, who had been looking from one to the other of us with bright, bird-like eyes, ran and took his place beside his brother.

"You can't blame *us*, Father," he cried, "because *we* were born in the Americas!"

I saw father totter as if he had received a blow; then with a low cry of pain he dropped into the chair beside him and hid his face in his hands.

"Even my little son has been taken from me," he murmured piteously, and lifting his head he looked at us all appealingly.

"Am I to go alone into my exile?" he cried, in a heart-broken voice.

And then I knew my turn had come to speak. I

must take my place on one side or the other. But what could I say? I, too, was a patriot, ready to dare all that a girl could for the land of her birth. I believed that the King had treated his colonies in the Americas cruelly and that all must resist or be made slaves.

But on the other hand there was father whom I loved with all my heart, and he, too, loved us. Never had I heard him speak an unkind word to one of his children. It was as if he had tried to make up to us the affection we had lost when our mother had died. Should I, also, add to his sorrow and disappointment? Was he to go alone into a hostile city deserted both by his children and his friends?

These thoughts flashed through my mind more quickly than I can put them down, for in reality, it took but a moment for me to make my decision. Surely my country could spare me to comfort my father.

With a glance at Ethan, in which I hoped he would read what was in my heart, I hurried to father and threw my arms about his neck.

"I will go with you," I sobbed and buried my head on his shoulder.

"Thank God I have one faithful child left!" he cried and held me close to him.

As for me, the tears flowed all too fast. I knew that I had comforted father somewhat, but it seemed as if in doing it I had betrayed my country.

— and what would Ethan say to me now that I had taken sides against him?

I was too much upset to think of anything very clearly and just cried on father's shoulder, unheeding the passing minutes.

Aunt Nabby, however, brought me to my senses with a jerk, for her cold, practical speech jarred upon my wrought-up feelings. Perchance, because she too was moved, she appeared even less sympathetic than usual.

"James," she asked sharply, "is it still your intention to go to Boston?"

Father recovered himself with an effort and I dried my tears as quickly as I might.

"It is more than ever necessary that I should go, Abigail," he replied.

"Very well," she answered, calmly. "It is needful then that the arrangements for your journey be attended to at once. Charlotte, I suppose, will accompany you."

"Yes, and Jimmy also," replied father, knowing what was in her mind.

"Must you take the child?" Aunt Nabby asked with a note of pleading in her voice, for though she treated us all with equal justice, it was no secret that she had a particular fondness for our small brother.

"The boy goes with Charlotte and me," father replied, positively. "We will start at sunrise. I had hoped to be on my way this afternoon, but it grows late and I care not to travel by night."

Aunt Nabby said no more on that subject and left the room after she and father had discussed a few details of the trip. Then he seemed to note for the first time that Ethan had slipped away while I had been crying in his arms.

"Where is Ethan?" he asked, looking at me with a weary and sad expression in his eyes. And then, a little anxiously, "Think you he can have gone away? I would not part from my son in anger. Find him, Charlotte, my dear, and bid him come to me at once. Though we hold different opinions he must not think we are enemies on that account."

I know not what I had expected father to do about Ethan's confession. I had thought, dimly, that he might fly into a rage, perhaps, and order his son out of the house as he had Dr. Isaac; but 'twas plain he had no such feeling. Rather did he seem concerned that there should be no enmity between them, and this brought my tears afresh, while at the same time it made me glad.

I found Ethan in his room, gazing out of the window, and, as I entered, he turned a troubled, questioning face to me. But for a moment I knew not what to say, thinking he might scorn me for seeming to deny my country when he had braved father in its defence.

"Father wishes to see you, Ethan," I said, at length and his face lit up with pleasure.

"Is he not angry?" he asked, eagerly.

"Nay, he feared you might have gone away," I answered. "He says that you and he must not be enemies because you hold not to the same opinions. He would have you go to him at once."

"He is the very best of fathers!" cried Ethan, starting for the door, but I stopped him at the threshold.

"Ethan," I began timidly, "do you deem me a traitor?"

"A traitor?" he repeated, scarce seeming to understand.

"Yes. Because I let father believe I thought not as you others do about the Cause and said I would go to Boston with him!" It all came out in a rush and I looked appealingly at my brother.

"Nay, sister," he cried, patting me lovingly on the shoulder, "there was no need for you to make it harder for poor father. Had you not gone to him, I vow I could not have stood it."

"I'm so glad you don't blame me, Ethan!" I exclaimed, "for indeed I am a patriot still; but I feared you might think I was a traitor at heart."

"Never!" he asserted. "I knew you would never forsake your country, wherever you might happen to be. And who can tell," he went on, "perchance you may help to make father a patriot, too."

"Ah, that is my heart's desire," I murmured, as he left the room.

CHAPTER X

WE START UPON A JOURNEY

I KNOW naught of the talk that took place between father and Ethan, except that each seemed happier after it, and I doubted not they had come to an understanding.

But father still held firmly to his intention of going to Boston as quickly as possible, so there were many preparations to make against our departure in the early morning.

My chief concern was for Ethan. I liked not the thought of his joining the patriot army which, we were told, was encamped around Boston, holding the British under General Gage in the city. Father had spoken of our troops contemptuously as "a band of raggamuffins," and of Mr. Washington, our general, as "a mere provincial who could not hope to withstand the assaults of trained British regulars" under their great generals. We had heard something of the battle at Bunker's Hill, but each party had claimed a victory there, and I knew not which side had the truth of it. But without any doubt there had been fighting, and would be again, so that if Ethan joined our forces he was like to be killed. I could not bear even the thought of that.

We had scarce a moment alone together and I tried, with little hope I confess, to persuade him not to go. But I fear there was a lack of warmth in my arguments, for indeed I could not find it in my heart to ask him to play the shirker while others risked their lives to save the country.

Truth to tell I knew not what I desired, except that, whatever happened, I wanted no harm to come to this brother I loved.

"You would not have me show the white feather," Ethan replied gravely, when I begged him to stay at home.

"Oh, no, Ethan," I answered hurriedly, "but you must promise you won't get shot. You can take care of yourself as you will. There is no better woodsman in the country. 'Twill be easy for you to keep *miles* away from the British."

He laughed, as well he might.

"I may be a good woodsman," he answered lightly, "but you would have me a poor soldier indeed. Still, I'll promise not to run into danger for the love of it. I've no great desire to be killed just to show I'm a Whig."

"Did you tell father you were going to join General Washington's army?" I asked, a little anxiously.

"No, I saw no need of it," Ethan answered, "seeing that he inquired not what my plans were. Moreover he will not believe that matters are so serious as some others of us think. It is his con-

viction that war may yet be avoided. Sure I hope he's right, but 'tis the King who must give ground. The Colonies have done their utmost for the sake of peace, and mean to fight from now on."

"And I want to fight too," cried little Jimmy, who had heard the last of Ethan's speech as he ran up to us.

"Oh, ho! Here's a fine patriot for you," exclaimed his big brother with a laugh.

"Nay, you are making fun," protested Jimmy, stamping his foot with vexation.

"I cry your pardon," Ethan said, sober on the instant, as he noted how serious the lad was, "but you must grow up a bit, Jimmy, before they'll take you for a soldier."

"But what reason is there in that?" the boy insisted. "If they wait till I'm older I'll be but a bigger target for the British bullets. I can shoot—and as for the drilling," he went on, standing very stiff and straight, "I've watched you at it, and can do as well as any of your company, Ethan Morton," whereupon he brought his hand to his hat, giving the military salute most seriously.

Ethan falling in with Jimmy's humour returned the salute gravely, and for an instant the two stood facing, like a private and his captain.

Jimmy showed a proud bearing and his face was aglow with the enthusiasm he felt; but the next moment his hand fell to his side and he turned away with a sigh of discontent.

"'Tis naught but play," he murmured regretfully. "Father says I must go to Boston with him and Charlotte."

"Aye, 'tis best," said Ethan.

"And safer," I put in, foolishly.

"Safer!" repeated Jimmy scornfully. "'Tis as if I were a weak woman. Never mind," he went on, "when I meet General Washington 'twill be a different story. I've heard he is a man of sense."

Luckily we were interrupted just then, for otherwise I fear Jimmy would have caught the smile upon our faces and so have had his feelings sore hurt.

Shortly after daybreak the next morning we made our start for Boston. The sun shone bravely, and had we been upon any other business our hearts would have rejoiced at the prospect of the journey. As it was, not one of us but felt depressed, though Aunt Nabby showed little of her emotion, and kept us bustling about so busily that we had scarce time for moping ere we were upon the road.

The good-byes were quickly said. Father and Ethan gripped hands at parting and looked into each other's eyes in silence for a moment.

"Good-bye, my boy," said father at last, his voice showing how deeply he was touched. "I'm sorry that you and I do not agree on certain matters; but I quarrel with no man whose opinions are honest ones, whether or not I hold with them, and least of all with my son. Good-bye, and — and God bless you."

There were tears in Ethan's eyes as he wrung father's hand; and though he did not speak it needed not words to tell the love and respect he had for him. Nor were any of the eyes dry that witnessed that parting, for, while we could not look into the future, we failed not to realize the seriousness of a cause that was to separate a father and son who in all else thought alike, and between whom there was such a mutual respect and trust.

A moment or so later we were all in the carriage. Jimmy and I in the back seat, with father in front, driving our best pair of horses. Aunt Nabby had resisted all inducements to accompany us, though I think she was nigh to changing her mind as she kissed little Jimmy farewell.

"You will find me here when you return," she said. "Were it not for those geranium slips, and three pairs of Ethan's hose that are ravelled, I might have gone with you. As 'tis, I must stay."

"I would that your reasons were of greater weight, Abigail," father returned as he picked up the reins and started our horses.

As we neared the gate Aunt Nabby hailed us.

"Charlotte," she shouted, "pray bear in mind that peppermint and hot water is a fine and soothing remedy when Jimmy hath the green-apple colic."

As we turned into the lane she called again, so loudly that father stopped the horses.

"I clean forgot to tell you," she panted from running after us, "to bring me a packet of pins and

some needles. The prices they ask for them here are a positive scandal."

"Your aunt talks as if we went upon a junket," murmured father as we drove on; and I, looking back through my tears, wondered when, if ever again, I should see the home we were leaving and those dear ones from whom we had parted.

CHAPTER XI

JIMMY MEETS HIS GENERAL

OUR journeying to Boston was pleasant, and we found much to entertain us upon the road. Jimmy soon recovered his lively spirits and chatted gaily about all the things he saw, while father responded with a cheerfulness that surprised me. For my part I could not, at first, find joy in anything, and wondered how father could laugh, even at my little brother's droll sayings. It seemed as if he were actually glad to be leaving Elmtree behind us. But in this I was mistaken in a measure, for though it was true that he was rejoiced to be upon the way, it was because he hoped to accomplish a great good for the country in Boston, not at all because he was leaving his old home.

And then, as we drove through a beautiful stretch of land, covered with thick forests cut here and there by fertile farms, he told Jimmy and me what he believed to be the real cause of the estrangement between the Mother Country and the American Colonies, and how he looked to set all right.

"It is the politicians of both countries who are at fault," he explained. "'Tis they who are making the trouble. The King hath corrupt agents and bad

advisers who will not tell him the truth about us here. On this side, men like Adams, (a ranting lawyer, Charlotte, who should be hanged), influence the people by their falsehoods about the King, spurring them to do some untoward deed that is seized upon by His Majesty's ministers and twisted to their own ends. There are grave faults on each side, and those who should make plain the truth take pains to hide it for their selfish purposes."

In this vein he talked, growing more and more earnest, till I saw that he believed all that he said so firmly that I, too, began to doubt if all the fault was upon the King's side.

"But, Father," I asked as he paused a moment, "why doesn't the King come to the Americas to see for himself?"

"Oh, would that he might!" exclaimed father fervently. "Should he see this fair land and the good people who live in it face to face, this shadow of war would fade away like mist before the summer sun. But he is too full of affairs and so must take the word of the officials he sends. Unhappily, he cannot see rightly through the eyes of those who are blinded by their greed."

"But surely some one must tell him the truth of it," I said.

"'Tis for that purpose we fare to Boston," father explained. "General Gage has misunderstood our people. They are not to be frightened by soldiers nor bullied by a show of force. Therein lies all the

trouble. In their hearts our countrymen are loyal. 'Tis only needful to treat them like men. These facts the representatives of the King must be told by one they know to be a faithful subject. That is my mission, and it is my firm faith that in a short time these bitter controversies will have ended and this threat of war will be a thing of the past." Father spoke so confidently that I was convinced that he had but to put the matter before General Gage, the Governor of Boston, and all would be well.

It was not the King himself that the patriots hated, but the injustice of the laws imposed upon them. It was not that they minded paying the taxes levied for the King, but that they had no hand in making the laws of their country nor any means of laying before their ruler their side of any controversy.

These things I understood well enough, though I was but a maid of fourteen years; and so, believing that father had found a way to set matters straight, my spirits rose at the prospects of peace and I ceased in a measure to worry about Ethan. Nor, to my mind, was he a greater patriot than father, who indeed took a less popular way of showing his love for the Colonies; but who, nevertheless, was preparing to intercede for them with their oppressors.

We talked much of these things as we travelled at a comfortable pace, stopping at farm houses to bate the horses, and at night putting up at taverns where father was well known from previous visits.

As we neared Boston we found an increasing number of people at such places, and father cautioned us to say naught of our plans. But this was not so easy a matter, for the troubled times bred suspicion, and any reticence was viewed askance by those who knew something of father's politics.

At the White Hart, the inn at which we spent the last night of our journey, the curiosity about us was most marked. I had already noted that the nearer we drew to the city the more acute suspicion became, and had heard the word "spy" on more than one lip, though it was not intended for my ears. Also I discovered that the trend of travel was away from, and not toward, the city. Thus it soon became evident that our party, going against the current, was the cause of much speculation and comment.

Jimmy, being a bright and talkative child, was made much of wherever we stopped, and I was at first a little fearful that he might tell more than was wise.

The wife of our host was a sharp-featured, shrewish body who, promptly upon our arrival, made an excuse of seeing to my comfort to question me alone. She was curious as to the need of our sudden journey, saying that when father had come that way only a short time before, he had said naught of bringing his family back with him.

To this I made answer truthfully that we were but a part of the family, and that my aunt, my brother and sister remained behind at Elmtree.

My noncommittal answers evidently satisfied her not, for a little later I heard her interrogating Jimmy to the same end.

"Now, why, my little man, do you go upon such a journey in the heat of summer?" she asked in a pleasant, persuasive voice.

"Because in the winter," Jimmy returned innocently, "I take the croup, and Aunt Nabby will not let me go anywhere even with Dada. She says he hath never a care for wet feet."

"Aye, all men are like that," agreed our hostess. "But what saith your aunt to this sudden junket?"

"She made Sharly promise to give me hot peppermint water should I have a pain from eating green apples," said Jimmy after a moment's thought.

"And was that all?" questioned the dame, sore disappointed.

"Nay, there was another matter," returned Jimmy. "She e'en ran after us to the gate to say it."

"And what was that?" the woman broke in eagerly, thinking doubtless she was come upon the information she sought.

"'Twas pins," replied Jimmy soberly. "She begged us to bring her back a packet — and some needles, too."

"Now *that* I understand," said the mistress of the house, "and if you come by any cheap, I wish

you would fetch me a bundle. I have a neighbour who will take the half. Seven shillings and sixpence we used to pay, but now they are not to be had for twenty or more. They say they're fine and cheap in Boston," she added shrewdly, glancing sideways at the boy.

"Aye, but who would go to Boston for pins?" asked Jimmy, opening wide his eyes and looking up into her face artlessly.

Whether she was now satisfied I know not, but she ceased her questioning and left the room. It had been in my mind to add my caution to father's, but the glimpse I had of Jimmy's impish face as the woman went out convinced me that he had guessed what was in her mind and that there was no need to warn him against betraying the purposes of our excursion.

On the morrow we took to the road again, but ere we came near to Boston we drew aside into a sandy lane that, after an hour or two, brought us to a pleasant beach beside the sea.

"We await a fishing-boat here," father explained as we came to a stop. "Should we try to enter the city directly we might be stopped by the Colonial troops, and I am not minded to answer their questions. The boat should be here shortly, and in the meantime I will take the horses to a place of safety against our return."

Father unstrapped our boxes from the back of the waggon and drove away, leaving Jimmy and me

to amuse ourselves picking up shells and bright pebbles near the water's edge.

We were thus occupied when, on a sudden, the sound of voices behind us brought me about with a start and there, not ten yards away, were three gentlemen on horseback. The soft sand had so muffled the noise of their approach that they were almost upon us ere I was aware of it.

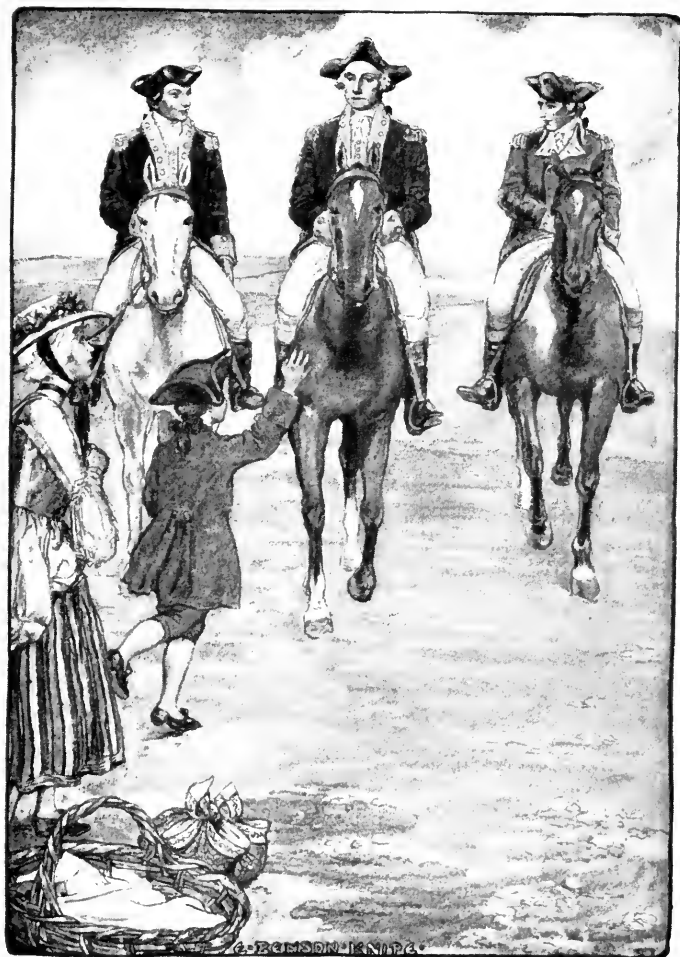
I scanned them eagerly, for they were bravely dressed in uniforms that showed that they were army officers. Two were quite young and handsome, but the third, several years their senior, held one's eye upon the instant, for his bearing was most distinguished.

I looked at the older man as they slowly approached, and so noble was he in appearance that it flashed into my mind that father had been mistaken, and that here before me was the King, come to set right the wrongs his colonies had suffered. So splendid was this man's appearance that I doubted not I had hit upon his identity, and as he came abreast of us I curtsied deeply, half minded to go upon my knees but not certain it was the properest thing for a maid to do.

All three looked at us pleasantly and were for passing on with a polite nod of salutation, when little Jimmy, who I doubted not, had been staring open-mouthed, suddenly found his tongue.

"'Tis General Washington!" he cried at the top of his voice.

“Your Excellency is discovered,” laughed one of the younger men. And then I realized that I had been wrong in thinking this the King, though I was sure no man could have looked more kingly.



"'Tis General Washington!" he cried

CHAPTER XII

WE REACH BOSTON

AT Jimmy's outcry the three officers reined in their horses, and the boy ran forward to where they had stopped.

"I told Ethan you would let me fight," he panted from excitement.

"Now who is this gallant soldier?" asked General Washington, with a kindly smile for us both.

"If you please, sir," I said timidly, stepping toward them, "he is my little brother, and he is much put about that Ethan would not let him join the patriot army."

"And who is Ethan?" inquired the General quietly.

"He is my elder brother, sir — Ethan Morton who may by now have joined your troops. He was to leave Elmtree just after us," I answered.

"And what do you here upon the beach so far from home?" asked the General, pleasantly enough but with a glance of the eye that compelled the truth, though to be sure it did not occur to me to tell him aught else.

"We fare to Boston, sir," I replied.

"To Boston!" echoed one of the aides, his hand going to his sword.

"But Boston is scarce a safe place for good patriots these days," remarked the General gravely.

"Sir," I made answer, "we go with father, who holds a different view on these matters."

"A family with a foot in each camp," cried the second of the aides, so scornfully that I was stung nigh to anger.

"Nay, sir," I returned quickly, "father is an honest man and loves this land, but —" and with a rush I told them of the burning of the hay and how father had stopped the shooting on the common, and, as well as I could, explained his object in seeking Boston. "It is to speak with General Gage and have him treat fairly with the patriots," I ended. "Father thinks that, being a Loyalist who knows the land and its people, his word may be believed by the King's agents, and so a stop put to this threat of war."

"Would that he might accomplish his purpose!" said General Washington solemnly. "I see your father is an honest man and no less a patriot because he holds opinions some others of us find hard to reconcile with the actions of the King and his ministers."

"You see, sir, he was born in England, and that makes all the difference," Jimmy piped up, at which the aides smiled broadly, though Mr. Washington's face held its grave expression.

"You're right, my lad," he said, earnestly, "it makes a great difference. But," he went on, turning to me, "what if your father fails in his mission?"

"We shall return to Elmtree, I suppose, sir," was my answer.

"But it may not be so easy to get out of Boston as it is to get in," His Excellency remarked half to himself; then, to one of the aides, "Write out a safe conduct through our lines for Mr.—" he paused, looking to me to supply the name.

"Mr. James Morton of Elmtree in the Massachusetts," I explained.

"I have it, Your Excellency," said the aide, writing busily.

"For Mr. Morton and children," added the General, and a moment later, receiving the paper from the young officer, he handed it to me.

"Give that to your father, my child," he went on, "and tell him that I trust this will always be a free country where a man may hold an honest opinion in the respect of all."

"Thank you, sir," I answered, curtsying low as I spoke.

"Come, gentlemen, 'tis time we were on our way." Mr. Washington took up his reins.

"Nay, but wait!" cried Jimmy, excitedly. "I go with you to join the patriot army," and the boy lifted his hands to the General as if he expected to be taken up.

The young officers laughed outright, though His

Excellency did not even smile but looked down upon the child beside the great horse with an expression of deep concern.

"So you want to be a soldier?" he asked very seriously.

"No," answered Jimmy promptly, "*I am* one." And straightening his little back he put his hand to his head in true military style.

To my surprise the General and his two aides acknowledged this punctiliously, bringing their hands to their hats in answer to the boy's salute, and to me the four made a picture scarce to be described, so full of meaning did it seem.

"And now, sir," said the General, addressing Jimmy a little sternly, "what are the duties of a soldier?"

"Ethan says," Jimmy answered quickly, still standing stiff and straight, "that a soldier's first duty is to obey."

"Aye, he's exactly right," declared the General. "If you have learned that, then indeed you are a soldier. Will you obey me if I detail you to a special post?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy, seriously.

"Then I appoint you a guard of honour to have a care for your sister throughout this war," continued His Excellency. "Danger may come close to her and I wish one of my soldiers to be at her side. You are to be that soldier. See that you fulfil the trust I have in you."

"Yes, sir," answered Jimmy, and if indeed he felt disappointed at the task that had been set him he showed it not.

"And now we must hurry on," His Excellency continued. "Farewell, my child," he said to me. "God speed your father's mission." Then all three gentlemen, seeing that Jimmy again stood at attention with his hand to his hat, saluted formally and galloped off.

We stood in silence for a moment watching the departing horsemen, but at length Jimmy gave a great sigh.

"I'd rather have gone with them," he remarked, "but I suppose some man must take care of the women. See to it, Sharly, that you damp not your feet in this wet sand and take a cold."

Before I could frame an answer we were hailed; and, turning, we saw father burst through the bayberry bushes lining the shore and come running to us.

"Who were those men?" he panted as he reached our side. "I saw you talking to them from the dunes and pressed forward with all speed, being alarmed for your safety. I was relieved to see that they were gone, for I feared that they might be some of the rascally rebels that surround the city."

"Oh, but they *were* rebels!" declared Jimmy joyously. "One of them was my general come to give me orders."

"What means the child?" asked father.

For answer I handed him the safe conduct, which he scanned with a growing frown upon his forehead.

"Was it Washington himself?" he questioned incredulously.

"Yes, Father," I replied.

"How looked the man?" father demanded a little excitedly. "Was he a rough? A braggart? A politician?"

"Nay, Father," I answered, "he was the noblest gentleman I ever saw. At first I thought he must be the King."

"The King!" he repeated derisively. "Are you crazed, Charlotte, that you could have such a monstrous notion?"

"I know not why I should have made the mistake," I returned. "But —" I hesitated, confused for the moment, "but if our king looked like Mr. Washington, I'm sure he would be here among his troubled people."

"Nonsense, child," father retorted, "it is like these ranting agitators to appear to be the opposite of what they really are. 'Tis that faculty gives them the means to befool the people. Their smooth tongues ape the speech of better men, and so they are listened to and believed. Why gave he this?" he ended, holding out the safe conduct.

"In case you wished to leave Boston and return to Elmtree," I explained.

"A trick!" cried father. "A trick to catch me, I doubt not, but I'm not so easily deceived," and

seized with a sudden anger, he made as if to tear the paper to bits.

"Oh, Father," I begged, laying a restraining hand upon his arm, "do not destroy it. Let me keep it for a remembrance."

He looked at me for a moment, his anger cooling, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders he handed me that precious bit of paper.

"'Tis no great feat to impress a child," he murmured, as he turned away.

At the same instant Jimmy spied a small vessel standing in toward the shore.

"Here they come," he called, running to the water's edge, and father nodded.

"'Tis the boat we take for Boston," he said in his usual tone, and we stood in silence, watching the little schooner come up into the wind, her sail flapping with a noise we could hear upon the shore.

A moment later a dory was put over the side and drew in rapidly, rowed by two men who seemed to know father and who treated him with much respect.

Luckily the sea was most gentle so that we embarked without trouble and were soon aboard the schooner and heading for Boston. I must confess that I liked not sailing with a deck-load of fresh-caught fish, some of which still flopped about disconsolately; but Jimmy was, of course, delighted, and soon made friends with the crew. He asked innumerable questions as to the best methods of hooking

fish, nor had he exhausted the subject when our voyage ended.

We made Boston just at nightfall, and went directly to the lodgings at which father always stopped. Two extra rooms were engaged for Jimmy and me, much to the delight of Mrs. Philbrick, our landlady, who on sight of father had begun to complain bitterly at the condition of her business.

But I was too tired that night to heed her or, indeed, to pay much attention to aught. I was half asleep I think during supper, and can scarce remember what passed after it, save that I tucked Jimmy into bed and kissed him good-night.

"Sharly," he whispered, drowsily, "were it not that I am a soldier I think I should be a fisherman and — and you could have the little fishes to play with."

He was sound asleep at the end of the sentence and I lost no time in seeking my bed in the adjoining room.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIES

IT took me a moment or two after I awoke next morning to account for my strange surroundings; then I remembered that we had come to our journey's end and were in Boston. I sprang from my bed, eager with all the curiosity of a country girl upon her first visit to this, the greatest city in the Massachusetts, to see the sights of which I had heard ever since I was a babe in arms.

I had been too tired the previous evening to take more than scant notice of anything; but now I was rested, and hurried to the window to have an early glimpse of this thriving town.

I scarce knew what I expected, but my spirits fell as I peered forth from the casement. It was raining briskly, and I, who had been used to a broad stretch of green before me, found my vision cut off by a row of houses only the width of a narrow, muddy street away. Few people were about, and these slunk along close to the buildings, glancing furtively over their shoulders as if they feared discovery.

"A dismal place, this Boston," I murmured, as I stretched my neck trying to spy an opening between

the rows of houses. "There's scarce room for a body to breathe."

Being unable to see any distance in any direction, my attention was naturally centred on the dwellings opposite. Many seemed to be uninhabited, and the drawn shutters gave them a look of blindness; but just across the way was a fine mansion which was evidently occupied, for the windows were thrown wide.

"What a careless housewife!" I exclaimed involuntarily, when I saw the rich damask hangings being soaked with rain as they flapped lazily in and out on each draft of wind. "Sure 'tis a shame," I thought, for Aunt Nabby had taught us all to set great store by such valuables and to treat them with care and respect.

But I was to see yet greater indifference, for, as I looked, a soldier in a scarlet uniform came into the room carrying a huge piece of raw beef. This he flung upon a beautiful mahogany table; and, to my surprise and indignation, took up a knife and began cutting it into slices, quite careless of the deep scratches he made upon the polished board.

'Twas all I could do to keep from calling out to him to stop, but I was to discover that I had witnessed no uncommon scene. It was but an instance of what it meant to have a hostile army quartered upon a city. Here was one of many happy homes ruined by the reckless and wanton soldiery. That first impression of dismay and horror was to be

strengthened and deepened by what I learned of the British troops in the days to come. They cared naught for the property of others, but robbed and pillaged on every hand; and to those who dared offer a protest, they served insult or worse without fear of reprimand from their officers, who should have taught them better.

However, all this knowledge came to me later, and though my spirits were dampened by the scene I had observed across the street, I was still anxious to explore the city.

We had breakfast in our own sitting-room, but father could scarce wait for the meal to finish so eager was he to be upon his business that had brought him there.

"I shall repair at once to the Governor," he explained. "There is not a moment to be lost. Perchance, Charlotte, by night we may find a change in the policy of His Majesty's agents toward the Colonies. I have heard that General Gage is a courteous and intelligent man. It but needs that I gain his ear and all will be well."

I was perforce much influenced by father's enthusiasm. If he could bring about a reconciliation between the Crown and our patriots no better work could be done by any man, and all would see his loyalty in a different light.

But although he was keen to be upon his errand he was not unmindful of Jimmy and me, for he arranged with Mrs. Philbrick that her daughter Susan

should accompany us about the city to see those things which were of interest. After that he left us for the day, satisfied that we were in good hands and guarded against all danger.

Along eleven o'clock the sky cleared and the girl, Susan, came to take us upon our first walk through the streets of Boston Town.

Now at first I was much taken by Susan's appearance, and thought to have found in her a companion upon whom I could rely. She was a pretty, modest-seeming maid of about sixteen years, gentle of speech and in appearance innocent of all guile; but once upon the street, I found her so timorous and uneasy that I scarce could put up with her. It was her excuse that she feared we might transgress some order of the British for the conduct of the remaining inhabitants, who, with comparatively few exceptions, had proclaimed themselves Loyalists; and, to my thinking, scarce needed such close regulation as Susan seemed to believe necessary.

For example, when we had come to a broad, park-like place in which grew many fine trees I stopped delighted.

"Is it the Common?" I questioned, for I had heard of it even in Elmtree.

"Aye, that it is, my dear," said a nice motherly-looking woman who was just passing. She smiled at my enthusiasm most pleasantly, and I would have thanked her for her politeness, but ere I had a chance

to say a word Susan seized me by the arm and dragged me away.

"Speak not to strangers," she whispered in my ear. "How know you she is well disposed?"

"Such nonsense!" I cried, put out by such silly conduct. "Is it treason to thank a stranger for a courtesy?"

"There is an order that none may stand and gossip upon the streets," she answered.

"Then 'tis a foolish order," I burst out wrathfully, and caught Susan glancing at me sidewise.

Again at the corner of Essex and Newbury Streets I stopped to examine a copper plate on which golden letters shone, which read as follows: "The Tree of Liberty, Aug. 14, 1765."

"What may this be, Susan?" I asked.

"Nay, do not stop here," she gasped, as if in great fear. "'Tis Hanover Square, and no place to rest."

"Sure it must be a most loyal spot with such a name," I protested.

"'Twas here they hanged Mr. Oliver in effigy," she whispered. "He who was the distributor of stamps in Boston."

"Oh, ho! Is that it!" I laughed. "Well, the British learned that their Stamp Act was not to be tolerated; belike they have other lessons in store for them."

I noted that Susan stared at me, and had I been

more thoughtful I would have put a bridle upon my tongue, but save in father's presence I had been used to speak my mind upon such matters and so was careless.

It was a warm day, and, to suit her interpretation against loitering, we walked very fast for a time. Unconsciously I drew forth my handkerchief to wipe my perspiring face, but once more Susan cried out in seeming terror.

"Nay, that is forbid above all things!" she exclaimed.

"Good lack," I sighed, "why may I not use my handkerchief?"

"'Tis said it is a signal for mutiny," she explained, glancing about her fearfully.

"What may one do in this city?" I burst out in disgust. "May I breathe through my nose or must I open my mouth like a fish? The British have the town. Are they so timorous that they shy at a flap of white like a nervous colt? Sure never did I hear of such silliness."

"To listen to you talk would make a body forget that your father was a staunch Loyalist," snapped Susan, evidently angered at my words.

"He is a Loyalist, but he's no coward to tremble at the actions of women and children," I retorted, not willing to have her think that father would hold with such senseless regulations.

Now it was in my mind that Susan, in order to im-

press a country maid, had exaggerated the rules prescribed by the British general who governed the city. But in this I was mistaken, for indeed the soldiery looked upon the people, be they Whig or Tory, with so much suspicion that it was a daily occurrence for persons to be taken into custody upon the most trivial excuses.

But this I did not know, and was ready enough to sniff at what I took to be attempts to intimidate me.

It must seem that our walk that morning was but a series of object lessons in what I might not do upon the streets of Boston, and indeed to some extent that was true; nevertheless I took great pleasure in all we saw, and was not a little impressed by the fine buildings and the bigness of the town itself. But so twisted and tortuous were the streets that I thought I should never learn my way about. 'Twas as if the people had built their dwellings beside the paths worn by wandering cows; and I have heard it stated, I know not with how much truth, that this indeed was the fact.

As we returned to Mrs. Philbrick's house, the hour for the mid-day meal having come, we rounded a corner, and met a gay company of officers mounted upon fine horses clattering along the streets.

On the instant Susan bobbed curtsy after curtsy to the horsemen, though I saw they took no manner of note of us.

"'Twas General Howe," she explained after they

had passed. "'Tis whispered he is to take Governor Gage's place — and that he looks for all the world like the rebel General Washington."

"Which one?" I asked, for I had seen none who resembled His Excellency in the slightest.

"The one in front," she answered. "He is handsome, is he not?"

"That is a matter of opinion," I returned, "but he looks no more like Mr. Washington than does a cat like a lion."

"Have you seen Mr. Washington?" demanded Susan quickly, but ere I could speak in reply little Jimmy stepped hard upon my foot.

"I think it is going to rain again," he cried, and gave me such a warning glance that I held my tongue.

Jimmy and I had our dinner alone in our sitting-room, and after the dishes had been cleared away and there was no fear of interruption, the boy spoke to me with a very grown-up seriousness.

"I've been thinking," he began, sagely wagging his head, "that I'm going to have trouble taking care of you, Sharly."

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

"You talk too much," he answered wisely.

"To whom, Jimmy?" I demanded.

"To that Susan," he replied. "I don't like her, and that's a fact."

"I won't do it again, Jimmy," I told him meekly enough, for truth to tell I had begun to feel a suspicion of that timorous, mild-mannered maid.

Father returned that night just as we were beginning to wish for supper and I ran to meet him eagerly.

"Did you see the Governor?" I asked.

"Nay, it was impossible to-day," he answered, showing a hint of his disappointment. "But I shall see him to-morrow, my dear. An interview has been arranged," and he smiled hopefully at the prospect.

We talked of our adventures, but I think father only half heard us, so occupied was he with his own plans. Jimmy began gaping early and I was as ready for bed as he at half after eight, and so an end came to our first day in Boston.

Thereafter our life for a time took up a regular routine. Father went off betimes each morning, and returned in the evening with a tale of some excuse for his not having been received. The General was away, or he was in ill health, or a special messenger from the King waited upon him; one pretext after another, but always a promise that the interview would be granted upon the morrow. Poor father, thinking of naught but the good he would accomplish once he had the ear of Mr. Gage, and certain his information would carry due weight, faltered not in his determination; and though I could see that these constant disappointments affected his spirit, he complained not, counting on each morrow to see his task accomplished. But I ceased to question him when he returned to us at night, being able to guess the

result of his day's waiting from the expression of his face.

As for Jimmy and me, we found the time pass pleasantly enough. After several walks in company with Susan, I decided we needed her not, and though we lost ourselves once or twice among the winding streets, there were no lack of courteous folk to put us upon the right track.

Thus matters had gone for a week or more, when one morning after we had made our start for the Common, I ran back to our rooms to fetch something I had forgot. I entered the sitting-room and noted at once that the door to father's chamber was ajar so that I could look in upon the mirror set above his dressing-table. A glance in that direction brought me to a stop, for the other side of the room was reflected and I saw Susan busily engaged in searching most carefully among father's boxes. With held breath I watched while the girl slyly poked about here and there, my first impression being that she had come to steal. This thought was seemingly confirmed when she took up a coat and turned the pockets out. Next, however, with great thoroughness, she felt all the linings, and finally, with a long needle, pierced the wadding put into the shoulders to help the set. Surely this was no ordinary thief, and instead of confronting her as had been my intention, I quietly left the room without disturbing her.

That night I told father what I had seen, and he commended my discretion.

"What you tell me is a surprise," he said, "and I cannot believe Mrs. Philbrick has any hand in the matter. There must be some other influence at work upon Susan. I should surmise she had been offered money for information."

"But will we stay on here, Father?" I asked.

"Why not?" he replied. "The quarters are clean and comfortable. Mrs. Philbrick is a good cook and does wonders with the poor materials at hand. Then, too, remember there are no soldiers in the house." He paused a moment, thinking. "I wonder," he went on, "can the work Susan is doing be the price of this immunity from occupation? Well, no matter. The girl is welcome to all she can find amiss. But," he added bitterly, "the Governor could get his information more cheaply by asking me what he wants to know."

It was a day or two after this that I discovered my own things had been tampered with. It was most carefully done and naught was out of order, yet I was confident that all was not as I had left it.

"What can they imagine I can do against the King?" I thought, laughing to myself; and, even as I stood there, a loud knock came upon my door.

I know not why, but I hesitated and looked at little Jimmy beside me, wondering if he too felt a sudden sense of fear.

"Shall I open it?" he asked in a half whisper.

"Nay," I replied, and crossing the room answered the harsh knock myself.

In the passageway stood a British officer backed by two scarlet-coated privates.

"Oh, what do you want?" I gasped, scarce attempting to conceal my surprise and apprehension.

The young officer consulted a paper he held in his hand, reading from it in a slow, monotonous voice.

"We have come to find one Charlotte Morton, daughter of James Morton of Elmtree in the Massachusetts, lodging one flight up with Mrs. Philbrick in Purchase Street."

He stopped, waiting for me to speak.

"I am Charlotte Morton," I said tremblingly.

"You will come with us," he ordered, taking a step toward me.

"But why?" I cried. "What have I done?"

"I know not," he answered with a shrug of indifference. "You are to be taken before the Governor. Doubtless to be tried as a spy. Come!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRISONER IN THE NEXT ROOM

THAT I should be arrested as a spy seemed perfectly impossible to me, nor could I at first think that the British officer was serious. Nevertheless I was in something of a panic, for I knew not what his visit portended. Evidently I showed that I was alarmed, for little Jimmy slipped his hand into mine to comfort me.

"Don't be frightened, Sharly," he said confidently, "I'll take care of you," and child though he was, his words heartened me and restored my wits.

"There must be some mistake," I said to the Lieutenant. "General Gage ne'er saw me in his life."

"Doubtless that is true," he replied, in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone; "for all that, he has ordered your presence. Come, we have no time to tarry."

"You mean I must go at once?" I asked in consternation.

"Aye, that I do," he insisted. "We can stay long enough for you to arrange your head-gear, but you may have no privacy. We are ordered not to lose sight of you lest you destroy the papers."

"Nay, there are none to destroy," I pleaded; but

he gave no sign of relenting, and I put on my hat with trembling fingers.

"Must the boy come, too?" I asked, referring to Jimmy.

"There was no mention of him," answered the Lieutenant.

"But I'm going all the same," cried Jimmy, making ready. "It is my duty and I must obey my commanding officer. All soldiers know that."

"Aye," answered the officer, "but I have no order to bring you."

"You have no order not to bring me," Jimmy retorted with one of his unexpected flashes of wisdom, "and if I stay I'll destroy all the papers. Be sure of that."

"Ah, then there *are* papers!" cried the Lieutenant, glancing about him calculatingly. "In that case I'll see that the rooms are locked against a thorough search. Come along, both of you. We must be on the move."

Many a curious glance was sent in our direction as we marched through the streets. I walked between little Jimmy and the young officer, and behind us stalked the two privates, musket on shoulder, making a formidable party to guard two children. Our youth was evident, and that we were under arrest, all too plain; but while pitying looks followed us, none dared to interfere even had they been so minded; for the British held the town with a ruthless hand, and a man's liberty was sacred only while he was discreet.

I think the young man at my side liked not his mission, for he hurried us on, scowling in some embarrassment at the attention we attracted; but he said naught until we neared the mansion in which the Governor lived, with those who formed a sort of court about him.

"Look here," he began gruffly, "you're over young to be in such a muddle. Take my advice and make a clean breast of the matter to the Governor. He hath a fondness for children and if he is in a good temper 'tis like enough he'll not be hard on a slip of a maid."

I think he meant it kindly, and I thanked him for his advice as well as I could, but never before had I felt such a hatred for his uniform, and 'twas all I could do to give him a civil answer. I know not why it was, but my arrest seemed to have awakened all the latent patriotism in my breast; and, girl though I was, I felt that day ready to fight the British with all my strength.

We were ushered into a great anteroom to wait until the General was ready to receive us. There were many others there, both men and women. Some of the latter complained loudly of their treatment, while others whispered together, glancing right and left as if fearing to be overheard; but the men sat silent with troubled looks, and all seemed to labour under excitement, due doubtless to the uncertainty of the reception they were like to receive.

Beside me was a large woman, finely dressed

though somewhat gaudy in appearance, who spoke to the dame next her in a tone quite audible to me.

“And now, forsooth,” she was saying, as I sat down, “they have failed to give us a pass to quit the city. We must leave all of our gear behind us as a pledge of loyalty. Didst ever hear the like? I thought to send my husband here to see what could be done, but he refused, saying that the mouse who walks into the trap scarce gets away again with all his hair; so here I am myself, and I’ll warrant the General will hear reason from me.”

In a little while this woman was ushered into the Governor’s private room; and, to my surprise, Jimmy and I were sent in at the same time, so that I had an opportunity to see how she impressed the General, and also to note something of the way in which the British treated the people of the city.

General Gage, who was sitting in a large easy chair with one foot upon a stool, did not rise as we entered. The stout woman made straight for his chair; but he heeded her not, his attention being at that moment taken up by a dainty little lady who was offering him tea. In fact the room was filled with a gay company, who laughed and joked while the Governor carried on his business between pauses in the conversation he kept up with those about him.

The ladies with their wonderful head-dresses caught my eye and sure I think some of their powdered pompons were built up a full eighteen inches,

while the gentlemen wore smaller wigs than I had been used to seeing.

Seated at a folding-table near the General was his clerk who leaned back in his chair squinting at the pen he was sharpening, his long legs sticking straight out most comical. He, too, gave scant interest to the business in hand and laughed over his shoulder with a pretty miss, who smiled upon him as if they had some fine joke between them.

"Wouldst have a dish of tea, Mr. Gage?" one of the lovely ladies was asking as we entered, bending over the great man solicitously.

"Nay, not till I finish with this rabble," he answered peevishly, and the lady flitted off with a light laugh.

"Now what is your business?" demanded the General of the woman who had preceded us; and I waited, interested to see how she would carry out her boast and make the man before her hear reason.

"Your Honour," she began, "you promised a pass for me and my family to leave town. I want naught more. My mother is sore ill in Roxbury."

"Gad's life! Another one!" cried the General. "Hie, you!" he went on, addressing the company in general, "here's another whose mother is ill in Roxbury. Didst ever hear the like? Sure there's an epidemic of sick mothers broke out in Roxbury!" at which sally the company burst into hearty laughter.

"Nay, but Your Excellency," the woman insisted

in no wise abashed, "I have a good hogshead of molasses that will make fine rum for your soldiers. Perhaps that will earn me a pass outside your lines."

"Ah, is that so!" exclaimed the General. "Let's have the place 'tis hid," and he nodded to his clerk who wrote down the directions the woman gave with a satisfied smirk.

"That will do," said General Gage, waving her aside. "Who is next?"

"But the pass, Your Honour," cried the woman in an angry tone. "Do not forget the pass."

"I issue no passes to Roxbury," the Governor replied coldly. "It is a hotbed of sedition."

"Then I'll e'en keep my molasses," declared the woman in a temper.

"See you here!" shouted the General, amazed at her temerity, "another word and you'll be clapped into gaol for a saucy rebel. You know well that the molasses is forfeit. All such was called in long since for the use of the military. Away, or I promise it shall be the worse for you."

There was no mistaking his tone and the woman hurried out of the room, glad, I doubt not, to be let off at all. Her going left little Jimmy and me facing the great man, and my heart sank as I realized that our turn had come, and I had no very good courage to face the ordeal ahead of me.

But a change was plain to be seen in Mr. Gage's face as he caught sight of the boy at my side, for he smiled and held out a hand to Jimmy.

"Come here, my lad," he said kindly. "What can I do for you?"

Jimmy went to him at once, showing no fear, which I think pleased the General mightily; but, ere the boy had a chance to answer his question, the officer who had brought us there spoke up.

"These are the children of the Loyalist, James Morton, Your Excellency," he said, at which the Governor's face underwent another change and he glared at me from beneath his beetling brows.

"Well, Mistress Morton," he began after a moment, and the room suddenly grew very silent as if all stopped their talk at the mention of our names. "I hear strange accounts of you, scarce to be expected from the daughter of one known to be loyal to the King."

"Sir," I made answer, not knowing what else to say, "I hope I am a good daughter."

"Perhaps,—but are you a good subject of King George?" he blurted out.

"I know not that I have failed in my duty, sir."

"Then, if you are a loyal maid," said Mr. Gage, taking a paper from the table beside him and flashing it in my face, "how comes it that you have this in your possession?" He spoke loudly and menacingly as if he hoped to fright me, as indeed he did.

"I know not what the paper is, sir," I suggested.

"Take it then and see," he replied, handing it to me with a sneer upon his lips.

I examined it and found, to my great surprise,

that I held the safe conduct General Washington had given us. I had placed it under some linen in my clothespress at Mrs. Philbrick's, wishing to keep it safe and clean as a remembrance. Even in my then excited state of mind, it flashed across me that Susan must be at the bottom of this potholer.

"Well!" growled the General, "have you naught to say for yourself?"

Now as a matter of fact the sight of the safe conduct had brought an immense sense of relief to my mind, for if this was all they had against me, sure 'twas easy enough to explain.

"Why, sir," I was quick to tell him, "'tis but a pass from General Washington. Father gave it to me."

"Ah, ha!" cried the Governor, leaning forward and striking the table at his side so goodly a blow that the papers jumped about upon it. "Said I not so? There's not a Tory in the land I'll trust again. Take her away," he went on angrily; "take her away and keep her a prisoner. I'll make an example of this —"

He continued talking loudly but I heard no more, for I was hurried out of the room without ceremony by the officer and his men. Though they treated me not roughly their intention to obey orders was evident enough. Without a moment's delay they escorted me to the second floor of the house, and before I quite came to my senses I was locked up, a prisoner.

It took me some little time to recover from the shock of this summary treatment, but slowly I quieted my feelings and began to look about me. Then, on a sudden, I realized that Jimmy was not at my side, and my anxiety quickly brought me to a rational state of mind.

What would happen to the boy? Had they separated us purposely? Would they treat him badly, hoping to gain some information they suspected him of possessing? These and a hundred other possibilities ran through my brain; but in the end I comforted myself somewhat. It was plain that the Governor had liked the child, and that thought reassured me.

For a time, however, I stood by the window heedless of what went on below me, trying to see an end to the matter; but suddenly my attention was arrested by a group of soldiers hurrying some one across the street toward the mansion.

With a little cry of alarm I recognised the man they held. It was father!

I stood as if rooted to the spot, numbed by apprehension; but presently I heard the sound of feet in the room next the one in which I stood. A few muffled words were spoken as if some order was given, and then the door slammed.

It needed naught more to convince me that father was imprisoned in the adjoining chamber.

My first inclination was to beat upon the wall and call to him, but this plan I at once put out of my head.

Such a racket would arouse the guard and so deprive us of any advantage our nearness might give. Yet to be so close to father and not able to let him know how matters stood nigh distracted me.

I dismissed the possibility of getting out of my room by way of the door. I had heard the key turn in the lock, and though the mansion had not been built for prison purposes, it served well enough. Therefore I directed my attention to the window which gave upon an iron balcony running part way across the house. To my great delight there was no bar upon the casement which opened inward. I had but to slip out upon the balcony and walk to the window of the next room. It seemed very simple, and I was on the point of laughing at the carelessness of the British in leaving so easy a way to liberty when my eye chanced upon a sentry below, standing upon the opposite side of the street. He walked slowly up and down, casting attentive glances toward the house. The British were not so careless as I had supposed. Any unusual movement upon the balcony needs must attract the soldier, who would promptly give the alarm.

Seemingly I was cut off from that route, and I cast about me for some other means of attaining my purpose; but there was none. I must go by the balcony or not at all.

This determined, I watched the sentry for a while, hiding myself behind the draperies that hung down upon each side of the casement. The man strolled

leisurely to and fro, stopping now and then to observe something passing in the street, but never for long taking his eye from the building opposite him. Yet I noted that at the end of his beat farthest from my window, he turned his back for an instant ere he started to retrace his steps.

In this I thought I saw my opportunity; and, without stopping to consider further the chances for or against my plan, I dropped to my knees and opened the window a crack, to be ready on the instant he faced the other way.

Just then a great clattering of horsemen coming along the street brought my sentry to attention to salute a party of officers who passed. At that moment I slipped out upon the balcony, drawing the window to behind me, and lay flat, in the hope that the wrought-iron railing would screen me sufficiently to make my presence there go unnoted.

Evidently this succeeded; for, after a glance in my direction, the man took up his patrol again with entire unconcern.

But though I was out of the room I was far from reaching my goal. Indeed I scarce dared move for fear a fluttering of my dress would direct the sentry's attention to me, so I stirred not until his back was toward me at the turn, and then but crept a few inches at a time.

Gradually, with more patience than I thought myself possessed of, I neared the next window and at last looked in.

There, sure enough, was father seated at a small table with his head in his hands, a picture of despair. My heart went out to him, and, forgetting my own trouble, I thought only of how I could comfort him; but I dared not lift my hand to turn the latch of the casement. Father must do that from the inside, and I was very fearful that, in attempting to attract his attention, I would bring myself to the notice of the sentry.

With a trembling hand I tapped gently at the bottom of the window, and was glad to see him raise his head at the first knock. But his face showed surprise and uncertainty as if he were not sure from whence the sound had come. Again I tapped, and this brought him to his feet.

At once he crossed the room to the window and gazed down upon me. I caught a look of consternation as he recognised who it was, and trembled lest he should do something to give the alarm; but he saw my finger on my lips and understood that he must be cautious.

By motions I indicated the soldier below, and he took in the situation at once, opening the casement a crack and thus leaving it to me to determine when my chance to enter had come.

I watched with fast-beating heart as the soldier lazily paced his beat, thinking he would never reach the end of it; the instant he turned, I pushed through the window and half tumbled into the room. Father closed it behind me and the next moment he picked

me up from off the floor and held me in his arms.

"Oh, Charlotte, my dear, what does this mean?" he whispered in anguish.

"It means that I, too, am a prisoner and that little Jimmy is lost and—and—" but I could not go on. Now that I had succeeded in my purpose, my wrought-up feelings threatened to overwhelm me, and I pressed my head against father's shoulder, struggling to control myself.

"There, there, dear," he murmured, patting me gently and trying to soothe me, "take your time, my child. Take your time."

But I was sure that time pressed, and in a moment or two I had stifled my sobbing sufficiently to tell father all that had happened to me.

"Ah, that is what is at the bottom of this business," he remarked in an undertone, when he learned that General Gage had possession of the safe conduct.

"But that can readily be explained," I said. "I could have made it clear, had the Governor but let me."

"Nay, 'twill not be so easy to put right," muttered father half to himself, taking a step or two about the room restlessly. "When so many in this land are trying to carry water on both shoulders, 'twill be somewhat difficult to prove to Mr. Gage that I was so single-minded in my loyalty that I gave a pass from Mr. Washington to my daughter as a keepsake."

"But that is the truth, Father," I insisted.

"Aye, but how is Mr. Gage to know that?" he answered. Then, struck by a sudden thought, he looked at me apprehensively. "They mustn't find you here," he whispered.

"Sure that couldn't make a very serious difference since I have not escaped," I argued.

"You shouldn't have come, for both our sakes," he answered; "if you are discovered here with me, that circumstance will give point to their suspicions. They will say our story of the safe conduct has been agreed upon. You must return to your room," and he moved toward the window.

But on his first glance at the street he stepped back with a suppressed cry of consternation.

"What is it, Father?" I asked, starting for the casement.

"Go not there," he whispered, "there are two sentries now, and they are standing looking up at this window. I know not whether their suspicions are aroused, but 'twill be impossible for you to return."

It was very evident that father was deeply concerned, and though I could not quite understand why he should be so seriously alarmed, I knew there must be a good reason for it.

We stood for a moment in silence looking at each other in dismay, and then from the hallway outside there came to our ears the sounds of heavy footsteps approaching the room in which we were.

With held breath we listened as they drew nearer and nearer, until they halted before our door.

Father with a finger to his lips to keep me silent, tiptoed to a closet and motioned me to enter it. As quickly and as noiselessly as I could I hurried to it and he shut me in just as a key grated in the lock of the chamber door.

CHAPTER XV

MISTRESS CECELIE PEMBERTON

I STOOD trembling in that narrow closet, scarce daring to breathe, while those about to enter fumbled at the lock. Had they come for me? Could the sentry in the street, whom I thought I had avoided, have observed me after all and given an alarm? In that case I was as good as found, for my hiding-place would be the first object of their search without any possible doubt. What the result of that would be I but dimly realized, though father's anxiety over the possibility gave me a grave sense of fear.

The door was finally flung open and in stamped three or four men, as I judged from the clatter of their movements.

I listened anxiously for the first word, expecting a demand to know where I was.

"Well, what is it you want now?" I heard father ask in a cool but slightly defiant tone.

"'Twill do you no good to bluster to me," a rough voice answered. "Save your breath to cool your porridge. General Gage has sent for you."

"Good!" exclaimed father, and I knew that he

as well as I was vastly relieved to find that I was not the object of their visit. "Good!" he repeated. "I've been ten days or more trying to see the Governor without success. I had rather come to him as a prisoner than not at all. Let us go," and I heard him take a step toward the door. Doubtless he was eager to get them out of the room.

"I'd not be in such hot haste were I in your shoes," came the answer. "The Governor likes not spies within our lines."

"Nevertheless I am most anxious to see him," father replied impatiently. "With your permission we will go at once."

"'Pon honour!" cried the officer. "You seem in a hurry to put a halter about your neck. His Excellency gives short shrift to such as you. But come along! I'll warrant you'll be singing small enough before the Governor."

From within my closet I heard the men move out of the room and go off down the hall; but there was no sound of the door closing behind them. For a while I stood stiffly in my narrow hiding-place, not daring to leave it for fear that one of the soldiers might have lagged behind. But on the other hand it was most necessary that I should escape at the earliest possible moment. I must win to General Gage to explain about the safe conduct, for there I realized was the principal danger that threatened father — and who could put that matter straight so well as I? But I, too, was a prisoner, shut up in

a closet, daring not to move nor scarce to breathe for fear of discovery.

Yet it was plain I could not help father if I stayed where I was, and therefore I could scarce be in a worse plight if, indeed, some one lay in wait for me. I must risk something, and on that sudden resolution I stepped boldly out into the room.

To my great relief it was empty and I looked at the door leading into the hall to find it ajar. Then the truth of the matter flashed into my mind. The last man to go forth had pushed it to behind him, caring little whether it shut or no; for why, indeed, should it be locked, seeing that no prisoner was within? I was free to go to the Governor, so far as barred doors were concerned.

I tiptoed across the room and peeped into the hallway. No one was in sight. I had but to descend to the floor below where General Gage conducted his business.

This seemed easy, but as I impetuously started out I paused, remembering only too well that I had seen a sentry posted at the bottom of the stairs who would most certainly halt my further progress.

In dismay I looked about me, knowing not what to do. I glanced down the long hall and noted that at the end farthest from me another corridor joined it at right angles. I could not tell where this led, but it seemed to hold out a chance of escape and I could see no other.

At any rate, I determined to brave what might be

hidden round that corner, and staying not to puzzle over a matter I could not decide otherwise, I ran as noiselessly as I could down the long hallway. I reached my goal and turned, delighted to find another stairway down which I started with a rush, giving myself no time to question whether here, too, a guard had been placed. But on the landing, half way down, I ran plump into a lady coming up.

"La, child!" she exclaimed. "Has Mr. Gage sent an express for you that you ride post?"

With a fast-beating heart I looked up into the sweetest, merriest face I had ever seen in my life.

She was a young lady with the loveliest golden hair set high upon her head and lightly powdered in the fashion of the other dames in the room below. She was dressed modishly in a flowered silk that matched the blue of her eyes. So pretty and dainty was she, that for a moment I stared at her in admiration, wholly forgetful of myself and my errand.

"Nay, my dear, you'll make me blush an you look at me like that!" she exclaimed with a silvery little laugh. "Come, sit and have a dish of gossip with me," and setting me the example, she dropped down upon the stairs, patting the step beside her invitingly.

"But I must to General Gage," I answered, coming to my senses.

"Sure, let him wait!" she laughed back, with a comical grimace. "He's so busy ragging the poor rebels that he'd scarce notice a maid. Come, sit. I vow I've had no chance of speech with a Provin-

cial—" she eyed me a moment critically, hesitating, "—provincial lady, since I came. I've seen naught of your great country save this dreary city of Boston and am like to die of curiosity. Please sit for a moment."

So charming was she, and so friendly withal, that I could not find words to deny her request. Also, I hoped perchance to gain some information as to how I might reach the Governor by this unfamiliar route; so I seated myself beside her.

"I can stay but a very short time," I remarked. "I'm not sure of my way to Mr. Gage."

"His private door is just at the foot of these stairs to the right," she answered readily, revealing what I most wanted to know, and I felt I owed her some consideration for that information, albeit she herself needed no excuse to win my regard.

"Now tell me—" she went on brightly, "do you live in Boston?"

"Nay," I answered, "I am a stranger and know little of it. Indeed I can scarce find my way about, being unused to so vast a city."

"So vast a city!" she repeated, clapping her hands joyfully, while her eyes danced merrily. "If this is so 'vast' a city what would you say to London?"

I was spared an answer, for to my consternation a soldier suddenly popped around the corner and took a step up toward us; but my little lady, turned on a sudden very haughty and addressed the sentry as she might an unruly servant.

"Know you not that this part of the mansion is private?" she asked with uplifted brows.

"Aye, madam," the man answered sheepishly, "but I thought I heard unwonted sounds and —"

She cut him off sharply.

"I but entertain a friend. You may go back to your post."

To my great relief, for I had made sure I should be taken, the man turned without another word and, saluting, disappeared around the corner.

"The stupid oaf," murmured my companion petulantly. "Now we must begin all over again — and we were getting along so nicely," and forthwith she returned to questioning me about the Colonies and our people, while I was at pains to answer as well as might be. And as some say of all women when they come together, she was most interested in dress and the like, having a funny notion that in the country we clothed ourselves like the Indians.

"Do you never wear skins and feathers?" she murmured plaintively, evidently vastly disappointed.

"Nay," I answered, laughing at her queer conceit. "We dress much as you do, though not quite so modishly. At present the patriot ladies will wear naught but homespun."

"They deny themselves silk!" she exclaimed, her eyes growing big with wonder. "I vow they deserve to make homespun the mode." Then glancing at my gown of imported stuff, she added, "But you, I see, are for the King."

"My father is a staunch Loyalist," I answered, "but my brother is with Mr. Washington's army and — and I love them both."

She caught the note of trouble in my voice and was quick with sympathy.

"You poor child," she cried, leaning forward and putting her arms about me lovingly. "But that is what we women have to endure. Our men think little of our feelings when they have silly fights among themselves. But come," she went on, suddenly releasing me and getting to her feet, "I'm keeping you from Mr. Gage, where no doubt you long to be."

I stood up beside her and for a moment she regarded me intently.

"We must see each other again," she said earnestly. "My name is Cecelie Pemberton. I am the daughter of Colonel Pemberton of Mr. Gage's staff. Tell me your name and where you live and how old you are?"

The questions came with a rush as if she would know all about me in a moment.

"I'm called Charlotte Morton," I answered. "My home is in Elmtree in the Massachusetts, but at present we lodge with Mrs. Philbrick in Purchase Street."

She repeated the address as if to fix it in her memory.

"But you haven't told me your age," she insisted with an inviting smile.

"I'm fourteen," I replied.

"As much as that!" she exclaimed. "La, I'm but scant seventeen myself. I'm coming to see you," she went on brightly. "We're going to be great friends. Yes, we are, though I ne'er thought to have a friend in the Americas." And with that she took me in her arms and kissed me. "Run along now, to your Mr. Gage," she added, giving me a little push, "and, my dear," she ended in a whisper, "don't be afraid of him. He can deny naught to a pretty face, particularly if 'tis a child's."

And with that she whisked up the stairs as light as thistledown, taking my heart with her.

"Scant seventeen," I murmured vastly surprised, for I had thought her a woman grown.

I hoped she would not forget to come and see me, but I had little time then for much speculation. All my anxiety for father came back and I hurried down the stairs, turned sharp at the bottom and ran into the sentry, standing before a small door.

For an instant I thought I was lost, then I gathered my wits to face him.

"Did you see Mistress Pemberton pass this way?" I asked as innocently as I could.

"Nay, Missy," he replied, saluting. "The gentry most times use the other door," and he stood aside for me to enter.

It was no time to hesitate, and I pushed boldly in, shutting the door behind me.

To my surprise, however, I was not in the room

itself but in a sort of embrasure, curtained off, and I was about to part the damask hangings when the harsh voice of General Gage came to me, and I halted of a sudden, my heart in my throat.

“Nay, I’ve heard enough, James Morton,” were the first words. “I would be a fool to believe your cock and bull story of the safe conduct. You’re naught but a spy. Of that I am assured. So far I’ve been too lenient with such rascally rebels. ’Tis time they had both a lesson and an example. Away with him! To-morrow at sunrise, James Morton, you shall be hanged!”

CHAPTER XVI

HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL GAGE

THE door closed behind father and his guards, but although I had heard Mr. Gage sentence him to death upon the morrow, I scarce took in the meaning of his words. It seemed so absurd that any one could believe that he was a spy that I could not realize that a stranger might indeed be doubtful of his loyalty to the King. To me it was but a matter of explanation, and I started to part the curtains behind which I stood, meaning at once to tell the Governor the truth about the matter of the safe conduct Mr. Washington had given us. But just as I was about to enter, another spoke and brought me to a halt.

“What are you going to do with father?” I heard Jimmy ask, and with a thankful heart that he was safe, I peeped between the draperies. He was standing somewhat behind the General and seemed not at all confused or embarrassed. Also I noted that the fine ladies and gentlemen had disappeared and save for two soldiers near the far door, the room had no other occupants.

At the sound of Jimmy’s voice the General turned in his chair with a jerk.

"Ods Life! How came you here?" he demanded sharply.

"I came with my sister Charlotte," Jimmy replied, in no wise abashed by the other's gruffness. "Don't you remember?"

"To be sure I remember," the Governor answered, "and I thought you were locked up with her now."

"Oh, no!" Jimmy exclaimed. "I stayed here. 'Twas more amusing."

I noted that Mr. Gage had some difficulty in keeping his stern, forbidding aspect toward the boy and even thought I caught the sound of a chuckle, but at that moment a young officer came in.

"I beg leave to report, sir," he announced, saluting, "that the rooms occupied by James Morton in Purchase Street have been searched and no papers of importance found."

"But Cunningham distinctly said that the boy threatened to destroy the papers," the General blustered. Then stopping suddenly he looked at Jimmy for a moment. "Very good, leave it to me." He dismissed the officer with a curt nod, at which the other saluted again, and left the room.

"There was small use in searching for any papers," Jimmy remarked. "I just said I'd destroy them so that Lieutenant wouldn't dare leave me behind."

"Oh, indeed, was that it?" remarked the General quietly, and he began forthwith to ask the boy

all manner of questions about Elmtree, seemingly having forgotten all about the business in hand. Jimmy answered readily, taking his stand beside the General's chair as he might have had the gentleman been father.

"And now, touching the matter of those papers —" said Mr. Gage suddenly, and I realized that there had been method in this questioning of his. He hoped to trap the boy when off his guard.

"I told you there were no papers," declared Jimmy at once.

"There was the small matter of a pass from Mr. Washington," retorted Mr. Gage with sudden sternness.

"Aye, so there was," admitted Jimmy. "I forgot that. You see father wouldn't use it, so we came in with the fish."

"With the fish?" echoed the General.

"Yes," Jimmy went on enthusiastically, "and they're very slippery, don't you think? But it must be nice to be a fisherman. Wouldn't you like to be one?"

"I have work enough being a general," answered Mr. Gage with a chuckle.

"Yes, of course," Jimmy agreed sympathetically. "But then, when you have a holiday, you might try being a fisherman. You'd like it, I'm sure."

"We might go together some day," said Mr. Gage, "but see here, why were you so anxious to come with your sister?"

"It was an order," replied Jimmy soberly. "My general told me to take care of Charlotte."

"And who is your general, may I ask?" questioned the Governor.

"General Washington, of course," returned Jimmy, saluting like a soldier.

"Then you are a rebel, sir!" cried Mr. Gage, rising menacingly in his chair.

"Oh, yes, indeed," Jimmy responded promptly, in no wise frightened. "Didn't you know that? Father doesn't like it," he went on, his voice dropping a little. "He's all for the King. But a man must stick by his country, and so I'm a rebel. But," he added hastily, "I'm not a spy and you don't have to hang me."

"I'm glad of that," the General jerked out, sinking back in his seat. "Now tell me how long you and your father were in Washington's camp."

"We weren't there at all," Jimmy explained with evident regret. "I wanted to go, but my general told me I must stay and take care of Charlotte. I told you that before," he ended a little impatiently.

"Aye, so you did! So you did!" Mr. Gage hastened to say. "But where then did you see Washington?"

"Oh, that was on the beach while we were waiting for father," Jimmy replied. "We were looking for shells, and then my general rode up and gave us the paper and told me to take care of Sharly

— and,” he added threateningly, “you mustn’t hurt her.”

“Nay, I think we’ll send for her,” replied the other, and he gave an order that I should be brought before him at once.

When the soldier went out he turned again to Jimmy.

“Now, sir,” he said, blusteringly, “when your sister comes I will question her, and I wish you to keep silent. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand what you say,” Jimmy replied, “but you must not speak crossly to Charlotte. She isn’t used to it.”

“Oh, indeed!” cried the General, bursting into laughter, but he said naught further on the subject and I noted that Jimmy made no promise not to talk.

But the Governor’s summons for me made a vast difference in my plans. I wished now that I had stayed where I was in the room upstairs. I had remained hidden behind the curtain, listening to Jimmy, feeling certain that the boy’s ready answers must convince Mr. Gage of the truth about the safe conduct, and I saw that he meant to question me to the same purpose and so compare our stories.

That would be well enough, save that my escape would increase his suspicion; and then, if he knew that I had overheard what he and Jimmy had talked of, the fact that my tale agreed with the boy’s would lose all weight.

I must discover myself to him at once and in such a manner that he should think I had but that instant come. Should he ask me straight out how long I had been behind the hangings I must perforce tell him, but I meant to act in such a way that he would take the time of my arrival for granted.

To this end I opened the door noiselessly, then slamming it violently, rushed into the room breathing hurriedly as if I had been running.

So sudden and unexpected was my entrance that the General leaped to his feet with an outcry of surprise, his hand going to his sword.

"Now what means this?" he cried, staring at me. "How came you here without the guard?"

"I came by way of the balcony outside the window," I answered truthfully.

"But there is a sentry placed to watch that balcony," he protested.

"I crawled on my hands and knees so that he would not see me," I explained.

"And so out through an empty room!" His Excellency exclaimed, beginning to stride about. "You've made a mock of my guard."

He was interrupted by the entrance of an officer.

"I beg to report, Your Excellency, that the maid is gone," the newcomer said, saluting.

"Oh, indeed!" the General fairly shouted, standing between me and the young man. "You found the room locked, hey?"

"Yes, Your Excellency," was the reply.

“And no trace of the girl, hey?”

“None, Your Excellency.”

“And monstrous mysterious you make the matter, I doubt not,” the General went on in a rage. “Well, sir, the maid is here, and no thanks to you,” and he stepped aside so that the officer could see me.

There was silence for a moment while the Lieutenant regarded me with marked surprise.

“Aye, you may well look as if you’d seen a ghost,” Mr. Gage continued wrathfully. “A fine guard you keep, when this slip of a child can evade it. Go, sir, and post a sentry on that balcony without delay — and ’twould be well to see if any of your prisoners are left.”

The young man saluted and departed without a word.

“’Twill not be so easy for you to escape again, Mistress Morton,” growled the Governor, seating himself.

“Nay, sir, I had no wish to escape,” I answered quietly. “Else I had not come here.”

“No wish to escape,” he repeated. “Then what did you want?”

“Justice for my father!” I burst out.

“Justice! Justice!” fumed the General. “I think every babe in this land is born a lawyer. They all prattle of justice. Was I not bearded on the Common by a pack of boys scarce so high,” holding his hand to about the height of the table, “all de-

manding 'justice'! They said that my soldiers had invaded their ancient and honourable rights."

"And had they, sir?" asked Jimmy, very serious.

"Aye,—but they will no more," he answered, then turned fiercely to me. "And now you come seeking justice."

"Nay, you must not scold Charlotte," exclaimed Jimmy. "She doesn't like it."

"Well, upon my soul," murmured the General, leaning back in his chair and looking at Jimmy as if he were some strange animal. "Am I to run this government to suit a pair of saucy children?" And then, almost courteously, he addressed me again. "What of your father?"

"Sir," I began hastily, for I feared his mood might change again, "my father is heart and soul a king's man. He was shunned at home because of his open opposition to his neighbours, and came here to do what he could for peace. On the way, he left us on the beach to await the coming of the boat that was to bring us to Boston, and —"

"It was then my general came along and gave us the paper, as I told you," Jimmy cut in.

"Be silent!" insisted the Governor. "Let thy sister speak."

"Mr. Washington gave me the pass, sir, although he knew not father nor had even seen him," I hurried on, wishing to make my point clear. "He said this must ever be a free land where all might be at liberty to follow their own beliefs. But father

would have torn the paper to pieces had I not begged him to let me keep it. 'Twas then he gave it to me."

"And why did you want it?" asked the General suspiciously.

"Because General Washington wrote upon it," I answered.

"So the daughter is less loyal than the father," he said, a little sadly, I thought.

"Nay, now," Jimmy broke in eagerly. "'Tis Ethan and I are the patriots. Charlotte sides with father."

Perhaps it would have been well if I had held my tongue, but somehow to remain silent before this British general would have been like denying my country, and that I could not do.

"Oh, Your Excellency," I faltered, "Jimmy thinks I am not a patriot, but that is not the truth. I could not tell father, for his heart would have been broke to find all his children against his king, so, as a female's politics are of no moment, I said naught. Yet, sir, my heart is with the Cause."

The General sat for a moment thinking deeply, his eyes fixed upon the floor.

"Now how, indeed, can we win if the very children cry for freedom?" he murmured to himself. Then on a sudden his mood changed and he jumped to his feet. "Bring hither the prisoner James Morton," he ordered; adding, with bitter sarcasm, "If, indeed, he is still a prisoner." Then he turned to

me, speaking quite gently, "Your father shall be liberated, Mistress Morton. I believe your story of the pass, and—" he took the paper off his table and handed it to me, "you may keep your remembrance of Mr. Washington."

"Oh, thank you, sir," I cried.

And at that moment I thought Mr. Gage one of the nicest persons in the world, though indeed he had but acted fairly. But I was soon to change my feelings toward him again, for he was a strange man, gentle and courteous at one moment, but at the next unreasonable and violent.

Father was brought in and his face lighted with pleasure and relief at sight of his children.

"Sir," Mr. Gage began at once, "you are free. Your children have been good advocates of your cause and have convinced me that you are a Loyalist at heart. But, sir," he went on, his voice hardening, "I have heard of your action in the matter of the hay intended for His Majesty's troops, and you seemed somewhat over-scrupulous in your dealings with these rebels, and a shade too thoughtful for their rights."

"Your Excellency," father replied in a firm voice, "it has been my heartfelt desire to serve the King, and to that end I came to Boston. Since that day I have tried to gain a private audience with you."

"To what purpose?" asked the General.

"To tell Your Excellency," replied father, "that I, knowing the people of this land, am assured that

if His Majesty's servants continue the policies they are at present pursuing they will lose these Colonies for the Crown."

"So!" ejaculated Mr. Gage, his face growing scarlet with rage. "So! You are another of those who would school me in my duties? Have a care, sir, you are not free of me yet!"

"I have no thought for myself," retorted father. "If my life could bring peace to this land I would lay it down gladly. The people of these Colonies ask not indulgence but justice, Your Excellency, and so long as you try to bully them with your soldiery —"

"Enough! Enough!" shouted General Gage, nigh beside himself with wrath. "Think you His Majesty's agents need the advice of ignorant Provincials? If fault there be, it is that I have been too lenient with this rebel rabble; but that fault is easy righted. My reinforcements will soon arrive and then we'll put a speedy end to this tempest in a teapot. As for you, James Morton, begone out of my sight! I like not the kind of loyalty that comes with soft words for the enemies of the King. Begone, sir, ere I repent of freeing you!"

He ended in a loud, angry voice and took a step toward us threateningly.

Father looked at him a moment sorrowfully, then with a sad shake of his head, he held out his hands to Jimmy and me and led us from the room.

CHAPTER XVII

A NEW FRIENDSHIP

I THINK I scarce realized how serious was the predicament from which we were now happily freed. But I was glad and excited nevertheless to be out of the clutches of Mr. Gage, and inclined to chatter gaily of our adventure. Father, however, was in a different mood. The business upon which he had set his heart had come to naught. The Governor would not listen to his plea for fair treatment for the Colonies, and his dream of peace was farther away than ever.

He walked beside us, deep in thought, as we took our way back to our lodgings, and heeded not the constant wagging of Jimmy's tongue. I knew only too well how bitter was his disappointment, but had no words to comfort him. Yet I could not be altogether cast down, for in the failure of his mission I saw a prospect of happiness for myself. Surely, now that he could accomplish naught in Boston, it was reasonable to expect he would return to Elmtree, where I longed to be.

At the end of a rather silent dinner father brightened up a trifle and I put the question of our returning home to him.

"Nay, not yet," he answered.

"But, Father," I pleaded, "General Gage will not heed you. What good can you do by staying in this dismal city?"

"My dear," he answered gently, "it would be a coward's part to give up at the first rebuff. Mr. Gage may not always be the Governor. Indeed, there is a rumour that Mr. Howe will soon have the position. I trust he will be more reasonable. Nay, daughter, we must have patience, for the good to be gained is worth any sacrifice."

And so we stayed on, days running into weeks and months, ere we left the city.

We kept our rooms at Mrs. Philbrick's, well satisfied that Susan had done her worst, and, out of shame, I suppose, she came not near us when it could be avoided. As father said, the place was clean and comfortable, and there was small sense in discommoding ourselves to spite Susan.

Father continued his struggle to influence those in authority, being greatly encouraged at times but more often despondent. Little by little he grew more silent and there were days on end when I was sure he forgot the very existence of Jimmy and me, so absorbed was he in his own affairs.

All this was a source of deep anxiety to me, who could not fail to note the great alteration that had come in the happy, loving, cheerful father we had known. Not that he was cross with us; nay, rather it was that we no longer formed a vital part of his

life; that having set his heart upon a certain object he could think of naught else, and meant not to rest until it was accomplished.

Elmtree seemed very far away. A few letters from Aunt Nabby reached us, dwelling mostly upon household affairs. She mentioned in the first one that Ethan was from home, but said naught further on the subject. Father made no comment, but I knew that he, as well as I, often looked to the heights surrounding Boston, beyond which the patriot army was encamped, wondering how fared the young man we both loved, and saying a short prayer for his safety.

As had been predicted, Mr. Gage sailed back to England, leaving to Mr. Howe the task of governing Boston; but this change brought father no nearer his goal, though he ceased not his fruitless labours.

Had it not been for one circumstance, our long stay in Boston would have been well-nigh unbearable to me, but as a result of my adventure in the Governor's mansion I made a life-long friend who helped mightily to ease the anxieties of those weary months. True to her promise, Mistress Cecelie Pemberton visited me no later than the next day, and from then on our intimacy ripened until we loved each other like sisters.

I soon found that the most grown-up thing about her were the clothes she wore, very modish to my country eyes. She was in fact a most merry companion, ready at any play with Jimmy, who nigh

worshipped her, and spurring him on to express his politics upon every occasion. And what was more she would agree with him, until the boy declared that he and Cecelie were better patriots than I.

“And I think he’s right, Mistress Charlotte Morton,” she would declare mockingly, with a toss of her fair head.

Scarce a day passed that we did not see each other, either at the Governor’s house or at Mrs. Philbrick’s. Together we explored Boston from end to end, for of course Colonel Pemberton’s daughter could go anywhere she willed.

We took long walks and had all sorts of adventures which seemed vastly interesting and exciting at the time, though upon looking back upon them they were but the trivial doings of two maids and a small boy, for Jimmy was ever with us.

The summer was very hot, at least so it seemed to Jimmy and me who were used to the free air of the country. Cecelie also complained greatly, vowing that the English climate was vastly more comfortable than that of the Americas. It was reported also that there was much sickness in the city, but this, happily, came not near us.

From the very first, food had been lacking, but as winter approached and Mr. Washington’s army drew their lines tighter about the city, this condition became more and more acute. Fuel grew so scarce that we saw the North Meeting House pulled down for firewood and many a private dwelling suffered a

like fate, while even the prized Liberty Tree was not spared.

"We have pork and beans one day and beans and pork the next," complained Jimmy disconsolately. "Aunt Nabby need not have worried about green-apple colic."

"'Tis your patriot army that is trying to starve us," said Cecelie. "You must blame Mr. Washington if the food is not to your taste."

"Nay," protested Jimmy, "'tis Mr. Howe who is so stubborn. If he would but surrender there would be no lack of provender."

"That's one point of view," laughed Cecelie, "but I fear, Jimmy dear, we shall have to eat a deal of beans before Boston surrenders."

And after that Jimmy seemed to think that the more he ate the less there would be for the redcoats and stuffed himself with patriotic zeal.

Very early in our friendship Cecelie and I had talked to each other of the ones we loved who were not with us. At first, I know not why unless it was that I was myself motherless, I had taken for granted that Cecelie was in like case, but a remark of mine to this effect brought a quick denial.

"Nay, Charlotte," she exclaimed, her face softening, "I have the dearest omther in the world. I would that I could see her, even for five minutes. Heigh-o. I grow tired of always being grown-up, and long to have her tuck me into bed of a night."

Then Cecelie told me of her brother Philip.

"To me he seems almost as much of a baby as Jimmy," she explained. "And it is because of him that I am here in the Americas. Phil had a serious illness and is not strong, and mother dared not risk the journey for him yet would not leave him, so I am come in her stead to nurse father in case he is wounded."

Of course I told her of Ethan, Jane, and Aunt Nabby; but it was my older brother in whom she showed most interest, seeming never to tire of hearing me talk about him, which pleased me well enough, for I never wearied of recounting his deeds and sayings. I now think a person is apt to be disappointed when she meets one of whom she has heard such praise, but I considered not of that when I told Cecelie about Ethan.

So it shortly came about that we called each other's brothers by their first names though we had never seen them, nor were we sure we ever should, even when we laid plans to that end for the time when the war should be over.

"It isn't a real war," Cecelie would insist. "As soon as our reinforcements come the poor Provincials must give up."

"Nay," cried Jimmy, "we'll fight all the harder."

"But raw militia cannot hope to beat our regular troops," Cecelie answered, not because she wanted our army defeated or our Colonies enslaved; but because she, in common with nearly every one, be-

lieved that our men could not win against the famous soldiers of England.

“Well,” said Jimmy thoughtfully, “I dare say our militia can’t run so fast as the redcoats, but they can shoot straighter.”

At which remark we could not help but laugh.

CHAPTER XVIII

A PAIR OF PORTRAITS

NOW beside Cecelie there were in Boston many other English ladies, the wives and daughters of the officers who had come with Mr. Gage's army. Indeed, the expedition had been thought but a gay junket soon to be ended with little or no fighting; but the siege had proved to hold small pleasure for them and they were put to it for amusement of any sort. The few patriot ladies who were unwilling to bribe their way out of the city, held aloof from the invaders, deeming it not seemly to spend their days in light pleasures while their sons and husbands risked their lives for the Cause. Thus it came about that our hostile visitors were forced to entertain themselves, which, to my thinking, they succeeded in doing very well. There were routs and balls nigh every night, with now and then a play to break the monotony.

Of these I heard a deal from Cecelie, and though she scoffed at them, saying they were most stupid affairs compared with the gaieties of London, they seemed highly diverting to me.

Nor did I lack invitations to join their parties.

Cecelie introduced me to many of her English friends who would have made me one of themselves in all their pleasures; but this Cecelie would not permit, vowing, and rightly, that I was too young for such frivolities.

But I, more than a little curious, was wont to protest, and begged to be permitted to see a play at least.

"Nay, Charlotte, 'tis no place for a child," Cecelie insisted.

"You are like my sister Jane," I answered with a pout.

"Then Jane must be a very nice person," she retorted, and so the matter ended in a laugh, for it was hard for any one to resist Cecelie, I least of all. The fact is she played at being a mother to me, and though I was sore disappointed at times I realized that she acted only for my good, and loved her the better for it.

There was one play, however, to which I had no wish to go and yet was taken by father who deemed it his duty to appear at the performance with his family. 'Twas writ especially for the occasion by General Burgoyne, and was called "The Blockade of Boston." All the parts were taken by ladies and gentlemen, and on this account, apparently, Cecelie offered no serious objection to my going.

"There are to be no low actor folk," she told me, "but I doubt if you like the piece."

I will not deny that I was vastly excited as we

took our seats, for never having seen a play of any kind, I was most curious to know how it was managed. All the Tories in the city were there, and these, with the brightly dressed officers, made a gay throng. I watched the scene eagerly, listening to the buzz of talk going on all over the hall as the gentlemen strolled from group to group, complimenting the ladies, or talking politics to each other.

" 'Tis fine!" Cecelie exclaimed. "If there were only cries of 'fine Chaney oranges' 'twould be like a real play at home."

Finally a gentleman appeared upon the stage and spoke in a loud voice.

"To your seats, ladies and gentlemen. The curtain rises," he announced.

And in a moment or two all was quiet.

It was as well that I had some pleasure ere the play began, for the piece was so little to my liking that, had I dared, I should have quit the place. But my discomfort was short-lived, for just as one of the actors was making a mock of Mr. Washington, there came an alarm that Bunker's Hill, then held by the British, was being attacked. For a moment this was thought to be a clever addition to the play, and there were bursts of laughter all over the hall; but a sharp command, "Officers, to your posts!" brought us all to our feet, telling us at last that the warning was no jest.

In a moment all was confusion. Men shouted

orders as they ran from the building, and shortly none were left save women and a few civilians.

" 'Tis a fine climax to a stupid play! " murmured Cecelie in my ear. " Father says 'tis no sign of courage to poke fun at a brave enemy."

Cecelie was as angry as I about the play, and I doubt not she aired her views frankly among her own friends, for she was ever free of speech, caring naught who heard her.

This reported attack upon Bunker's Hill was but another false alarm after all, planned, some said, by the patriots, to spoil the play. Whether that was so or not, all the Whigs were delighted at the outcome.

So passed the winter with but little to mark succeeding days. My fifteenth birthday came and went unheeded, and Christmas brought only increased longings for our home in Elmtree.

One morning in looking over the *Boston News-Letter* I found an advertisement reading as follows:

MASQUERADE

On Monday, the Eleventh of March, will be given at Concert Hall, a subscription Masked Ball. By the fifth of March a number of different masks will be prepared And sold by almost all the milliners and mantua-makers in town.

" Cecelie! " I exclaimed, when next I met her, " whatever is a masquerade? " For indeed I had never heard of such a thing.

"La, child, do you not know?" she asked almost pityingly. "They are all the mode in London, and many extravagancies in the way of costumes appear at them I warrant you."

"But what is it?" I demanded.

"'Tis a ball, my dear," she explained, "at which each person wears some disguise, and with a mask to aid the deception, mingles with the crowd, trying to discover her friends without herself being discovered. At the supper all unmask, and then you may believe there are some amusing situations."

"And I suppose you are going?" I asked enviously.

"Aye," she agreed, "I'm going, of course; but 'twill not be very entertaining, for every one here knows every one else, and there is no chance that you may be talking to a perfect stranger who thinks you are his lady-love and courts you accordingly."

"It must be vastly good fun," I murmured, knowing that I must stay at home and feeling much regret thereat.

"To be sure, dear," she answered, "but most of the fun is got out of planning one's costume, and in that you must help me, for you have a pretty taste in such things."

That in great measure reconciled me, and for the next few days Cecelie and I did little else but visit milliners' shops and discuss her mask, much to Jimmy's disgust. And out of this grew a circum-

stance that was to have far-reaching effects, though at the time naught was thought of it.

Now from my babyhood I had been wont to draw pictures of the things I saw, and so one day, when Cecelie was having her costume fitted, I took a pencil and some coloured chalks and made shift to draw her. She was exquisitely pretty to my thinking, and my heart was in my task, so that I made a fair portrait of her; one at least that would be easily recognised, though it had not the spirit of the original.

I was modest enough about this small accomplishment of mine and hesitated to show Cecelie the drawing when it was finished, but she insisted, and so perforce I was obliged to let her look.

"I vow!" she exclaimed, admiringly, holding her head to one side as she gazed at it, "you are quite an artist, Mistress Charlotte. But you have made me prettier than I am."

"Nay, but it is like you," I answered, not a little proud of her praise.

"'Tis the image of me," she insisted. "Why have you not told me you had such a talent? Have you any other drawings at home?"

"Naught but a picture of Ethan," I answered.

"Of Ethan!" she exclaimed. "And you never showed it to me, knowing all the time that I was dying to see how he looked? For shame, Charlotte! I might have imagined he had a snub nose and a wry mouth."

Needless to say Cecelie made me fetch the por-

trait of Ethan the moment we returned to Mrs. Philbrick's, and I rummaged among my treasures to find it.

'Twas but a small head set in a locket, yet the face that looked out from it was wonderfully like Ethan's, and I held it in my hand for a moment, gazing at it with loving eyes.

Cecelie took it but made no such to-do over it as she had about her own. She looked at it long, however, and when she spoke it was with quiet earnestness.

"May I show this to father?" she asked at length. "You have a great talent, Charlotte, and father, who has had much experience, can, I doubt not, give you some good advice."

Of course I was glad to let her have it, and a little later she went off with Ethan's portrait in her pack-pocket.

That same afternoon father came to our lodgings, telling me that if I wished to write home he had a chance to send a few letters, but that I must make haste.

I inscribed a careful note to Aunt Nabby, thinking it only my duty, but the one I really wanted to write to was Ethan. However, I had but time to dash off a hurried line to him ere father came for it.

"I would I were at home," I wrote, "but two good things have come of this trip to Boston. We saw General Washington and I have found a real friend. Her name is Cecelie Pemberton. She is English, but thinks we have the right of it, and here

she is," I ended, scrawling my love and my name and enclosing the sketch I had made of Cecelie.

I know not quite what made me do it. Certain it is I had no such intention when I sat down to pen my letter, but wishing him to know something of my new friend, and not having time to describe her, I put in the drawing in place of words.

And now of a sudden, matters came to a conclusion. On the fifth of March we were awakened early by the sounds of cannon, and although this was not an unusual experience, it continued with such persistence that father went off to see the meaning of it. I was expecting Cecelie, but finding that she did not come I went in search of her.

She was at home, surrounded by piles of her own and her father's clothing which she was industriously packing into boxes.

"What is it?" I cried in astonishment. "Are you going away before the masquerade?"

"When we go I know not," she answered, "but there will be no masquerade. Have you not heard that the Yankees have fortified Dorchester Heights and now command the city? Father says the order to evacuate Boston has not been given yet, but he is sure it must be soon."

I scarce took in the meaning of her words, but seeing work to be done I offered to help her.

"Nay, dear," she said, "you will have your own packing to do."

"What mean you?" I asked.

“Your father is a Loyalist, Charlotte, and is like to leave with the rest of the King’s party,” she explained. “You had better go back to your lodgings at once.”

I did as she bade me and, sure enough, found father busy preparing to move.

“Oh, Father,” I cried, “Cecelie said she thought you might need me. Are we going with them?”

“Nay, my dear,” he answered, looking up with a brighter face than I had seen for many a long day. “Nay, dear, we are going home.”

Little Jimmy beside me gave a howl of delight, and I could scarce believe my ears.

“Oh, I am so glad!” I cried.

“Aye,” said father, beaming upon us, “we are going home to England!” and with a sinking heart I understood that he spoke of his boyhood’s home and not Elmtree.

CHAPTER XIX

GOOD-BYE TO BOSTON

THE hurry and bustle of the next few days gave me a little time to grieve over my disappointment. That we were going to England instead of Elmtree was a bitter blow, and at night ere I went to sleep I fear my pillow was damped with tears. Yet there was naught to be done but make the best of the matter with as good a grace as I could command.

Father, having failed in his mission with Mr. Gage and Mr. Howe, renewed his hope in the prospect of influencing the ministers of King George in London.

"'Tis there I should have gone in the first place, Charlotte," he confided to me, his face glowing with fresh enthusiasm. "The people here are but the mouthpieces of those in England, and 'tis they who do not understand. When I tell them the true conditions, all will be well."

I gave Cecelie my news upon our next meeting, little thinking that it was to be the last for many, many weeks.

"Then you'll see mother and Phil before I do!" was her first exclamation, when I told her we were

for London. "Heigh-o, but I wish we travelled the same road," she went on with a sigh. "But we are off to New York or Halifax, I know not which."

Cecelie gave me the number of their London house, exacting a promise I was ready enough to give,—that I would take the news of her and her father to Madam Pemberton as soon as might be upon my arrival.

"I'll write a letter advising them of your coming," she cried excitedly, "but 'tis like you will reach there first. Give my love to Phil, and this to mother," she ended, taking me in her arms and kissing me.

I left, expecting a visit from her on the morrow, but instead came a little letter saying that Colonel Pemberton, expecting the city to be bombarded, had hurried her aboard a ship in the harbour for safety's sake.

I told father of this and he laughed at the idea.

"Nay, there will be no bombardment of Boston," he said confidently. "Why should Mr. Washington destroy what will soon be his?"

And this proved to be the case, though to judge by the haste with which the British and Loyalists left the city, it would seem that but few shared in father's opinion.

'Tis impossible to describe the confusion that took place when once it was decided to evacuate. All Boston, it appeared, was in a struggle to flee the town and take refuge on the ships, all too few for the hundreds who sought their shelter. Waggon over-

loaded with household belongings blocked the streets leading to the wharves. Men and women, bending under the weight of heavy burdens, trudged wearily in the same direction, stopping now and then to shift their loads or to abandon some cherished possession because of lack of strength to carry it further.

Then, too, as if by magic, good patriots popped up on every hand now that they no longer feared the British soldiery. Nor did they fail to jeer and mock at the Tories, who had scoffed at them but a few days before. Scenes both laughable and pathetic were to be seen in every quarter of the city; but the saddest sights were at the water's edge where the multitudes crowded, begging for places aboard ships already filled to overflowing.

And each person had some treasured property they wished to take with them. Furniture of all kinds, pictures, bedding, rich damask curtains, pots and pans, any and all things for use or ornament, stolen in many cases from the citizens of Boston who had left their homes at the mercy of the invaders.

But such things had to be abandoned. There was little enough room for people who wished to leave, and so these properties were dumped helter skelter into the bay, or burned in the streets to make way for the waggons to pass. It was a sad sight to see beautiful tables and chairs, bedsteads, dainty or massive mahogany desks, and hundreds of other household articles that would float, covering the surface of the

water so thickly that it seemed as if one might walk out dryshod to the vessels anchored off shore.

I knew not what arrangements father had been able to make for the journey to England. The British had taken all the ships they could lay their hands upon to transport their own people, and I fancied it would be no easy task to find accommodations such as we required. Indeed, for a time hope sprang up in my breast that father would find it impossible to get to London at all, and so be forced to abandon his plan, in which I had lost all faith. Under such circumstances we would remain in America, even if we did not return to Elmtree.

This hope, however, proved groundless, for one afternoon he returned earlier than usual with the announcement that we would go aboard our ship that night, against her sailing on the morrow.

That evening we said good-bye to Mrs. Philbrick, and with no little trouble made our way to the wharves, where the confusion was quite indescribable. It had been rumoured that Washington's army was about to enter the city, and those who had not yet boarded one of the many vessels were making frantic efforts to escape.

Father, however, had perfected his arrangements, and after a short wait we were rowed out to a fair-sized barque called the *Sally Slocum*. I expected, of course, to find her crowded with refugees, but therein I was mistaken. So far as I could discover there were no other passengers aboard, and we were

given most comfortable quarters opening off the dining-saloon.

Father seemed happier than he had been for many a long day, and took a great interest in our comfort, laughing heartily with Jimmy over the little bunk he was to sleep in. They were to share the same cabin; and father was so merry over the prospect and so like his old self that I was in a measure reconciled to our departure.

To me he was most gentle, as if he understood how sore my heart was at leaving the country of my birth.

"Charlotte, my dear," he said, as he kissed me good-night, "be of good courage. We shall come back ere long to a happier land than we are leaving."

"But must we go, Father?" I pleaded, looking up into his face.

"Aye, my dear, that we must," he answered. "The King's ministers know not the temper of our people. The Colonists will give with both hands, an they are but asked. 'Twill be no great task to humour them in this, and once that is understood in England, all will be well. We go to make this plain to them. Good-night, my dear."

He kissed me again, smiling confidently, as he closed the door upon my narrow abode. But though I should have been happy in the belief that father would win the King's people to his way of thinking, I had lost all hope of it. 'Twas as if he followed a will-o'-the-wisp, always sure that he would

catch it, yet never finding it quite within his grasp.

The next morning I was aroused early by the noise of foot-steps running along the deck above my head. 'Twas useless to think of sleeping longer, so I dressed and climbed the companion-ladder to get a breath of fresh air.

Above I found the sailors busy with ropes and sails, preparing to start, I doubted not. At any rate they paid no heed to me, and with a sorry spirit I leaned against the rail and turned longingly toward the land I was about to leave.

My eyes caught the flutter of the British flag flying from a staff on the top of Province House, and, as I gazed, it began to descend until at last it disappeared. I thought little of it, though my glance still held the place. Then, of a sudden there appeared another flag of red and white stripes with a patch of blue in one corner.

For a moment I idly watched this strange new banner fluttering in the morning breeze; then, like a flash the significance of its appearance burst upon me. General Washington and his army had entered Boston! Over the city, for the first time, there floated the flag of my country instead of the emblem of England which we had learned to hate. Child though I was, I felt a thrill through my very soul and ere I realized what I was doing my hand was waving above my head and I was shouting "Hurrah! Hurrah!" at the top of my voice.

"What is it, Missy?" asked a nasal voice at my

side, and I looked up into the wrinkled face of a man who I learned later was the mate of the *Sally*.

"See," I cried, pointing. "'Tis the new flag of the Americas!"

"Humph!" he grunted, as his eye caught the striped bunting flying bravely over the city. "Humph! I reckon 'tain't likely to be thar long," and he turned away.

But I heeded not his croaking prophecy. To me it seemed as if I had witnessed a great event, as indeed I had; for there had been born a new nation, though its coming had been unheralded even by the most extreme of patriots who, as yet, scarce dared to more than whisper the word "Independence."

A few minutes later I was attracted by a small boat putting off from a great ship lying near the *Sally*. It came dancing across the water toward us and the sailor who had spoken to me before, sidled up.

"Here comes the Cap'in," he remarked, nodding toward the little boat. "Reckon we'll be goin' shortly."

An instant later it touched our side and two men clambered up to our deck. One was a fair, florid-faced person who at once disappeared below; so quickly, in fact, that I had scant time to observe him. The other was the Captain, and I looked at him earnestly though I must confess to no very great liking for his appearance.

He was a lanky man with a thin, lantern-jawed face and a huge, hooked nose. He was dressed

neatly in blue cloth, but his coat seemed small for him, so that his great hands and thick wrists hung out of the sleeves, giving his arms a suggestion of excessive length. But these things would have made little difference so far as my trusting him was concerned. It was his small, restless eyes, shifting constantly this way and that, which made me doubt him from the first.

He came upon the deck of the *Sally* and nodded to the mate.

"Up anchor," he commanded, in a low quiet voice that accorded strangely with his gaunt figure.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the mate, starting off to do his bidding. Then the Captain, seeing me, strode over to where I stood.

"You're Mr. Morton's daughter, I take it?" he said.

"Yes," I replied.

"He's aboard, hey?"

"He and my brother are below asleep," I told him.

"And a good place, too," he remarked with a smile and strode away again.

"Make sail," he called and the sailors jumped to their work.

The anchor was soon up, the white canvas stretched, and the *Sally* heeled gently to the breeze blowing from the shore. With scarce a ripple she began to move through the water, and the voyage to England was begun.

Our passage through the bay afforded a wonderful sight, for we steered in and out among a huge fleet of vessels of all sizes and rigs. The masts looked like a forest, so many were there; indeed I was told later, that, up to then, there had never been so great a fleet assembled in American waters.

And aboard one of these ships was Cecelie Pemberton. I watched as we passed one transport after another, wondering if I should ever see her again; and then, on a sudden, I remembered that she still held Ethan's picture. Well, I was sorry; but it was too late now to get it back, and my thoughts turned to the receding shore.

Perhaps upon one of the heights surrounding Boston, Ethan himself might be watching the *Sally* sail away, never knowing that his father, his brother, and his loving sister were leaving the land he served.

As we passed Nantasket my eyes, strained to catch the last look at the distant shore, filled with tears. My heart felt like a lump of lead in my breast; soon I could see naught, and found myself murmuring to myself, "Oh, my country, my own dear country, will I ever visit it again?"

CHAPTER XX

IN THE CABIN OF THE *SALLY*

MY gloomy thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the arrival of Jimmy. He came bounding to the deck and at sight of me began a loud complaint.

"Oh, Charlotte, you've beaten me up," he wailed, looking about him with eager curiosity. "Have you been here long?"

"Aye, a good while," I answered. "I couldn't sleep through the racket."

"I heard some of it," he explained, a little sheepishly, "but I thought 'twas just another bombardment of Boston, and drowsed off again, forgetting where I was."

"Where is father?" I asked.

"He's below talking to a gentleman," Jimmy replied. "Now which is the Captain of the ship?"

I pointed the man out to him and he went to make that lank officer's acquaintance, mindful only of the excitement to be gained by new experiences. He was too young to realize the full significance of our journey, and even I, who appreciated something of it and was heart-sick at leaving behind so much that was dear to me, could not be wholly indifferent to the

novelty of my surroundings. I soon took a leaf out of Jimmy's book, and though I would have given much to be back home, determined to make the best of everything.

At breakfast our ship's company were made known to each other. There was but one other passenger besides ourselves; the mysterious gentleman I had seen come aboard with the Captain. He was named to me, Major Trobridge of the British army, and though he talked little he seemed a pleasant man. He took a great fancy to Jimmy, having, as he told us, a boy of his own of about the same age.

Captain Stark, the master of the *Sally*, sat with us at the narrow table in the cabin, and upon further acquaintance he grew no more likable to me, although father and Mr. Trobridge seemed to place perfect confidence in him.

The conversation was of course upon politics, and the Captain, from his talk, was a staunch Tory who had declared himself to Mr. Gage early in the occupation, and under British protection had carried on a brisk trade in fish. When the time came for the Loyalists to leave the city, father had chartered his vessel to take us to London. But this was permitted by Mr. Howe only because he wanted to send a special messenger to the King in the person of Major Trobridge. These facts I heard later, a few at a time, throughout the weeks we were at sea; but at that first breakfast a matter developed that was to lead to unexpected adventures.

The fact was that the food set before us was uneatable. Father at the first taste laid down his fork in disgust. As for me I could scarce drink the water, so foul was it, and with the unusual motion of the boat, I could not but have felt a trifle squeamish even had the meal been of the very best.

Father at once taxed the Captain for his lack of proper provision, saying that it was out of the question to start upon so long a voyage so ill-victualled.

"What would you have, sir?" replied the Captain, in his low, quiet voice. "We have no stock of dainties, I grant you. Where indeed could we get them? Boston has been 'seventeen miles from a sea-port' this year gone. The pesky Provincials have so beleaguered it by land that good victuals are not to be had. The other ships are in no better case."

"At least the water might have been fit to drink," Major Trobridge remarked.

"Aye, had I been given time to fill my casks," the Captain agreed. "I knew not until the last minute whether I should be sent to Halifax under Mr. Howe's orders or allowed to make the trip for Mr. Morton."

"That is true," admitted father. "But is there no way in which we can supply ourselves?" He glanced anxiously at Jimmy and me.

"Aye," replied the Captain. "We can run into Salem —"

"Salem!" exclaimed the Major and father together.

"'Tis a hotbed of rebels," added the former.

"And they'll ne'er let you out again, once you put in there," father protested.

"Nay, leave that to me," said Captain Stark, his eyes shifting from one to the other of the gentlemen. "'Tis not so desperate a matter as you think. Leave it to me, sir. I'll victual the *Sally*, fit for the King, an you've the coin to pay for it. As to getting out of Salem — I'm not such a Tory that I haven't a friend or two in every port."

Father and Major Trobridge glanced at each other inquiringly, and Captain Stark, noting this, rose to his feet and started for the companion.

"I'll leave you gentlemen to talk it out," he remarked, as he left the saloon. "I'm under your orders. But this I'll say. If you fear trouble in Salem put your minds at ease on that score."

Neither father nor the Major liked this talk, and but for Jimmy and me would have dropped the matter then and there, making shift as best they could to exist upon the wretched fare already aboard the *Sally*. But the upshot of the affair was that the Captain was ordered to steer for Salem, and in the meantime, to ease our hunger, we munched hard biscuits, the only thing we could swallow.

True to his word, Captain Stark took us into Salem and out again without trouble. We anchored off shore early that afternoon and that night a goodly

quantity of fresh water and edibles was shipped aboard. But, as we were to discover, these were not the only additions to the *Sally's* load.

We had been out of Salem three or four days when, in answer to a question of mine about one of the sailors, Jimmy, who was of course hand in glove with all of them, let fall a remark that set me thinking.

"Oh, that fellow," he said. "His name's Amos Lovebird and he joined at Salem."

"At Salem," I repeated. "Did he not come from Boston with us?"

"Nay," answered Jimmy scornfully, "where are your eyes, Sharly? We had a round dozen more men signed on at Salem."

Now there had been naught said about being short-handed when the voyage began, but at the time I saw nothing particularly alarming in this news of Jimmy's, though I did make mention of it to father.

"Yes," he answered, nodding, "I have noticed that our crew seemed over large for so small a vessel, but that is a matter that concerns only Captain Stark."

Thus he dismissed the subject as though it were of no moment but I was not to be deceived. Father was far from easy in his mind, albeit the cause of this was as yet hid from me. However, I was sure from his manner that the increase in the *Sally's* crew had some bearing upon the anxiety he tried to conceal.

The days slipped by monotonously with scarce a break even in the fine weather to alter our hum-drum existence. I had quickly grown used to the motion of the vessel and no longer heeded her pitching and rolling, spending all my days upon the deck under a sail the Captain had had stretched for us against the sun. Father and Jimmy proved good sailors too, but Major Trobridge kept mostly to his cabin and was not, I think, a great lover of the sea. He and father held long conversations below deck, and I guessed the talk was concerned with matters which worried them both, but whether these had to do with the ship or the men who manned her, I was yet to learn. At meals when Captain Stark was at the table there was no hint that anything was aught but as it should be.

As the days passed the sun grew hotter and hotter till I longed for my summer muslins. Also I noted that the ocean had become a wonderful, transparent blue in colour, looking as if it would dye my kerchief if I dipped it in the sea. And then, one morning as Jimmy and I leaned on the rail watching the bow of the *Sally* break the azure waters into white foam, there came from the crest of a wave a shower of what appeared like new-minted silver which sped through the air for a moment ere it dropped back into the depths.

"How now!" cried Jimmy. "Are there water butterflies? I ne'er heard of them."

I turned to father, who was beside us, expecting

an answer to Jimmy's question; but he stood gazing at the waves as if he had seen a ghost.

"Father!" I cried, forgetting all else. "Father! What is it?"

"I would that I had never taken you children from Elmtree," he murmured, half to himself. "I have brought you into danger, and I know not where it will lead."

"Are the water butterflies so deadly as that?" asked Jimmy wonderingly. "They seemed rather to fly away than to threaten us," he added. "But perchance they have poison stings."

"Nay, 'tis not the flying-fish I fear," father answered slowly; "they are harmless, pretty creatures. 'Tis the story they tell which troubles me."

"The story they tell," I repeated, catching not the meaning of his words.

"Aye," father replied, "they, and the blue water, and the yellow seaweed we saw yesterday. All these tell a tale, but till now I shut my eyes, unwilling to believe that Captain Stark would play us so scurvy a trick. I must consult with Trobridge." And he left us at once.

What came of that consultation we were soon to learn. That same day when we had assembled for dinner all were seated save the Major who, of a sudden, entered from his cabin and moving quickly to the door of the saloon, closed it, turning the key sharply in the lock. Then going to his place at the end of the table opposite Captain Stark, he drew a

pistol from his pocket, and with great deliberation, placed it beside his plate.

It was evident that this threatening action was no surprise to father. He sat quiet, eyeing the Captain attentively but betraying no anxiety, as if he and the Major were masters of the situation. But if either expected any untoward action on the part of Captain Stark they were vastly mistaken. He settled back in his chair with a tolerant smile on his thin lips.

"You come well armed for so simple a meal, sir," he remarked coolly.

"Nay, 'tis against a kind of shark I'm armed, Captain," replied the Major, in much the same level tone. "I doubt not you're clever enough to guess whether 'tis a two-legged fish or no."

"I'm but a poor hand at guessing," answered the Captain. "I can only bid you remember, sir, that sharks are deep-water fish and not easily frightened."

"Gentlemen, 'tis no time for sorry jests, or words with double meanings," father burst out. "In plain speech, Captain, we find your vessel far to the south of the course for England. We would know the meaning of it."

"'Tis easily explained, Mr. Morton," answered the Captain. "We're making the track of the East India traders."

"To what purpose?" demanded the Major.

"To capture a prize or two," said Captain Stark with perfect calm.

"Then have you turned pirate?" cried father.

"I like better the word privateer, Mr. Morton," replied the Captain, his low voice growing more menacing in tone. "I have my letters of marque from Salem — and a British ship, sir, is my lawful prize, an I can take her."

"A Yankee trick!" scoffed the Major.

"Aye, an you like," retorted the Captain. "I care not to defend myself at the point of a pistol, but this I'll tell you —"

"Nay, and I care naught for your defence," father interrupted angrily. "In Boston you served Mr. Gage and Mr. Howe as the best of Loyalists."

"And I had not, where would I have been?" asked the Captain. "Your Mr. Gage would have clapped me in irons and taken my ship, had I done aught else."

"And served you right," put in the Major.

"Mayhap," answered the Captain, unruffled, "but it needs no skill to have your way when there is an army at your back and a fleet of war-ships to do your bidding."

"Enough!" exclaimed Major Trobridge. "That has naught to do with the matter in hand. We command you, sir, to set your course for England without delay."

"And if I refuse?" questioned the Captain, lifting his brows.

"'Twill be the worse for you," the Major replied, picking up the pistol from the table.

A low laugh came from Captain Stark's parted lips.

"And what would you gain at my death?" he asked. "You'd scarce live ten minutes after; for let me tell you both that every man jack of the *Sally's* crew is a staunch Whig, and if you kill me 'tis short shrift they'll give a pair of bloody Tories."

"Aye, but who'll sail the vessel and the Captain gone?" demanded the Major, as if he presented an unanswerable argument.

Again Captain Stark laughed easily.

"Now that's a landlubberly notion for you," he chuckled. "Dost fancy I am the only navigator here? Nay, count not on that. There's scarce a man aboard but could make shift to take the *Sally* into port, and there's a good round dozen who have been masters of their own vessels. Think you we Yankees, as you call us, are all fools that we would set out upon such an adventure with but one man able to sail the ship?"

'Twas evident that the Captain was getting the best of this dispute, for father and the Major exchanged glances that were in themselves confessions of failure. Plainly they were in the hands of Captain Stark and his crew, and threaten as they pleased, he would but smile the more.

"Come, gentlemen," he went on after a moment, "I'll play you fair enough. With a prize or two in tow I'll set you on the French coast, within easy reach of England. 'Tis not so far from the bargain

I made with you, Mr. Morton, for I said naught of the route I would take nor when I would land you."

"But you promised to take us to England," father protested.

"Aye, to be out of the clutches of Howe," the Captain answered candidly. "I'd have promised to take you to the moon to that end, seeing I had no choice."

"A scurvy business," muttered the Major, putting down his pistol, another sign of defeat.

"Call it what you like," said the Captain, "but let's seal our bargain ere the dinner grows too cold. I promise to land you in France; while you, on your side, will be at pains not to make too free with your pistols."

There was naught for it but to agree, but ere the word was spoken there came an interruption from the deck above us.

"Sail-ho! Sail-ho!" sounded the long-drawn hail, and we sat for a moment listening to the patter of feet across the deck, while the Captain smiled complacently, doubtless anticipating his first prize ship.

A moment later the skylight above the cabin was lifted and the mate put his head through.

"A British man-o'-war, Captain. A ship of the line under full sail on the port bow, sir," he announced and disappeared.

The words were scarce out of the mate's mouth ere Captain Stark had bounded to his feet and, un-

stayed by Major Trobridge, had unlocked the cabin door and darted up the companionway.

"We are saved, sir," cried the Major, grasping father's hand and shaking it. "One of His Majesty's ships of the line will make short work of the *Sally*. They dare not even resist. It has come in the nick of time, for otherwise we must have done this fellow Stark's bidding."

"Aye, it would seem so," father agreed, "but I am most anxious for the children if we come to a conflict."

"Nay, have no fear," the Major assured him. "The *Sally* will stop at the first shot across her bows."

He had scarce finished speaking when the Captain entered the cabin in some haste.

"Gentlemen," he announced, "as you heard, a British war-ship has been sighted. Doubtless she has already sighted us. This, you will agree, puts a different complexion on the matter between us."

"Aye, there you're right!" exclaimed the Major excitedly. "We're no longer in your power, Captain Stark," and he reached toward his pistol, still lying on the table.

"Hold hard!" cried the Captain. "Think you I would put myself in your power twice?" and he levelled a pistol at the Major's head.

"You will not have the upper hand for long," declared the Major bitterly, but halting nevertheless. "You'll not fight a ship of the line."

"Nay, we'll not fight," agreed the Captain unruffled.

"Nor will your letters of marque from Salem serve you with a British commander," father put in.

"Right again," said Captain Stark, "but I've a charter from General Howe to carry you gentlemen to England. Have you forgot that Yankee trick, sirs?"

"You scoundrel!" shouted the Major. "Think you I shall remain silent before the British officers who board the ship?"

"Aye, that you will," replied the Captain grimly. "You'll be silent, trust me for that, for if we're stopped, mark you, you'll both be dead ere the officers come aboard us," and as he spoke the mate entered the cabin and levelled a pistol at father.

In silence we waited, listening for the boom of the gun that would seal our fate.

CHAPTER XXI

WE STEER FOR FRANCE

I CANNOT tell how many minutes dragged themselves away while we waited in the little cabin of the *Sally*, expecting each instant would bring the signal for a tragedy. So suddenly had the crisis come, and so appalling was its possible outcome, that I was struck dumb with apprehension. Little Jimmy beside me, stared with wide-eyed amazement at the grim Captain and his levelled pistol. A glance at his firm-set mouth was enough to show that no mercy was to be expected in that quarter. Before him Major Trobridge stood upright, bravely fronting the issue, while father, threatened by the mate, looking at Jimmy and me with a face so full of sorrow that I knew he had forgotten himself entirely. His only thought was for his children, their danger his sole anxiety.

How can I describe the agony of suspense which I endured through those slowly passing moments. The common sounds of the ship made no impression on me. I heard naught of the wind humming through the rigging, the slap of the waves against the *Sally's* bows, or the creaking of her timbers as she swung to the swell of the seas. In my ears there was a profound silence, and it seemed that all

of us held our places like wooden figures; dumb, without thought, motionless; unable to do aught but listen, and conscious only of a great fear in our hearts.

Suddenly, after what seemed an interminable time, the skylight above was opened once more and a sailor's voice broke in upon our numbed senses.

"The British ship has veered to the eastward, sir!"

"Ah," murmured the Captain, with a long-drawn sigh that showed he had been under a greater strain than I, at least, had realized. "We shall not be stopped, gentlemen, so I am under no necessity to make certain of your silence," and with that he lowered his pistol.

The mate followed suit and left us, while father sprang across to the cabin and took us children in his arms.

As for me I found myself suddenly overcome with a trembling through my entire body, and clung to father, weeping my eyes out now that danger was past. Father did his best to comfort me, blaming himself again and again for having led us into such a position, until presently I regained control of myself.

By this time Captain Stark, who had gone on deck, came back and seated himself once more at the head of the table.

"Come," he said cheerfully, "we've tarried over-long for dinner, which I doubt not has been spoiled by too much waiting."

We returned to the table in silence, but I, for one, could not eat.

"Now, gentlemen," said the Captain after a time, "we have a saying that a man must trim his sail to fit the wind. I would urge you to bear that in mind, for whether you like it or not, you will have to put your trust in me. As I said before, we but wait to pick up a prize or two ere we lay our course for France."

And there the matter rested. Father and Major Trobridge were powerless to do aught and were forced to accept the conditions imposed by the Captain, who, I must confess, took pains to temper his power with at least a show of consideration for his passengers.

That same day the *Sally* took on a war-like character. Brass cannon were mounted in her bows and at convenient places along her deck, the crew were armed with dirks and muskets, a double watch was set, and the British flag under which we had been sailing was hauled down.

When these guns began to appear, and I doubted not there was plenty of powder and ball to load them in the hold, I bethought me of our stop in Salem. Father's demand for better food was a sufficient excuse for our going there; but here was evidence that Captain Stark had meant to make that port from the beginning, and the fresh provender was the smallest part of the cargo we took aboard.

From then on, with more or less anxiety, we

watched the horizon for sails, scarce knowing whether or no we should be glad at sight of one. Our feelings were rent between our sympathy for a possible prize and our desire to be in France. We longed to be quit of the *Sally* and her grim commander, yet we could not in conscience wish to hasten that end at the expense of a helpless victim.

One morning as father and I stood looking as usual at the blue ocean, it was suddenly cleft by a black fin and a huge fish appeared at the bow, swimming easily at a speed that kept it level with the ship.

"What is it?" I asked a little timidly, for I liked not the look of the creature.

"'Tis a shark," father replied, and just then Jimmy came running up to us.

"Oh, you've seen the shark," he cried, with evident disappointment. "I came to show it to you. The men say it leads us to our prize."

"Nonsense!" answered father, "'tis a superstition and naught more. The fish stays by the ship for the sake of the scraps from the cook's galley, and have a care, Master James, that you don't fall overboard, for I make no doubt the shark would relish a fat boy without seasoning."

I know not how much the great fish had to do with the finding of the *Sally's* first prize, but scarce an hour had passed ere a hail came from the masthead.

"Sail-ho!" was the shout, and after a little we on the deck sighted a small merchantman topping the horizon.

From the preparations that were made I looked for a fierce battle. The cannon were loosed from their lashings and shotted. Extra powder and ball were placed conveniently near the men who manned the guns. Cutlasses and muskets, grappling-hooks and an hundred and one other things of which I knew not the names nor uses, were brought up from below to be in readiness for the coming struggle.

The Captain, low-voiced and agile, went about from one end of the ship to the other, giving orders to his men who jumped to do his bidding. Whatever we, the passengers, thought of him, the crew to a man held him in respect, and even I had no doubt of his ability to put through anything he might undertake.

And all the while we approached the strange vessel till the very sailors upon her deck were visible, whereupon father, most anxious for our safety, sent us below, much to Jimmy's disgust and disappointment.

For myself I confess I was willing enough to hide in the saloon, for I had no wish to be a witness to the bloody fray I anticipated.

But I might have spared my fears, for after a shot or two across her bows, the meek merchantman hauled down her flag without even a show of resistance.

Captain Stark with a prize crew went aboard her, returning alone in an hour or two with word that she was a sugar ship out of Jamaica and carried a

fair booty. Then we sailed on again, our prize following in our wake. 'Twas no more dangerous or exciting than going to church of a Sunday.

A week later we encountered a fine Indiaman and though she tried to escape by crowding on all sail, the *Sally* proved to have the heels of her and after a day's chase, ranged up within gun-shot. This vessel made a feeble effort to fight us off, but soon gave up, much as had the other, with no blood spilled upon either side. She proved to be most richly laden, and the crew made merry over her capture.

That night at supper the Captain, seemingly in no wise elated, gave us good news.

"We are headed for France, gentlemen," he said quietly. "The time of our arrival depends upon the weather, but there will be no stop until we shall have reached the port of Calais."

CHAPTER XXII

WE FIND FRIENDS IN LONDON

WE reached Calais in due time without further happenings save for a storm which drove us out of our course for a day or two. We anchored off the quaint little port, and it was with a feeling of great relief that father, Major Trobridge, and I, stepped into the sloppy boat that was to take us from the *Sally Slocum*, for all time we hoped. Jimmy, however, was full of regrets at leaving his many friends among the sailors, and came away only after prolonged farewells, his pockets bulging with small gifts. Had he been so minded, I think he might have carried off every jack-knife aboard the ship.

Such was father's haste to reach England that he would make no stop in France. Jimmy and I were eager to linger, made curious by the strange talk of the kindly peasants, clattering about in their wooden shoes, the houses with their red-tiled roofs, the dogs harnessed to waggons on which were great brass jars, and a thousand other odd and interesting things. But that same day found us embarked once more on an ill-smelling fishing-smack bound for the British port of Dover.

And at length, near the setting of the sun we reached the shores of England, but as I tried to walk, the earth seemed to heave beneath my feet, so that I was forced to grasp father's arm to keep from falling.

"How now!" I cried in alarm. "Does England always rock as it does to-day?"

"Nay, child," laughed father, "'tis you who have still your sea-legs on, as the saying is. You'll soon find old England as steady a craft as you will ever want under foot."

I said naught in reply, but thought longingly of the good Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, which was not wont to play such tricks.

Major Trobridge bade us farewell that night, being in haste to reach London upon Mr. Howe's business after the delay caused by the *Sally's* long voyage. Father, though impatient to be on his way, deemed it best for us children to travel by day, so he took us to the Ship Inn for the night; and there, after a sound sleep and a good breakfast, I found that the earth had ceased its tricky leaps, which I had imagined to be the unpleasant habit of British land.

We started for London by coach at eleven o'clock that morning, and I could tell a long tale of that drive between the flowering hedge-rows and cowslip banks; of the guard with his horn and of how Jimmy tried to blow it, and nigh burst himself, to get but a sorry bleat for all his pains; of the fat driver with

his many-caped coat; and of the six stout horses with a postillion upon one of the lead pair; of the inns we stopped at to bait and rest; of Canterbury where we stayed the night; of the houses we passed, with quaint thatched roofs; of the "grips" as the guard called the ditches dug across the roadway for drainage, which came nigh to overturning our machine more than once; of the humble folk who dropped curtseys as we flashed by; of the ragged boys who ran beside, turning cartwheels for pennies; of a figure I saw dangling from a gibbet, fully dressed like a dandy, even to its wig, which in my ignorance I took to be an effigy like those once hung on the Liberty Tree. But I must hurry on toward London, as it was not until we were almost within sight of that great town that any real adventure befell us.

Here, suddenly, a horseman spurred out from the side of the road. He was splendidly dressed and his horse shone like fine mahogany, but the light struck on two pistols which he held levelled at the guard, and the wheel horse. As he approached I saw that he wore a dainty mask of pink satin that, at a little distance, showed not at all. There was a deal of talking among the passengers as the coach came to a sudden halt, and I heard the guard caution father who had put his hand into his pocket as if for a pistol.

"Nay, sir, draw not on him or you are a dead man," he whispered timorously. "'Tis Dick Deering."



He wore a dainty mask of pink satin

I must confess I was more interested than frightened at being stopped by a highwayman whose appearance was so elegant. Nevertheless, for all his fine dress and manners, he went about his business with a practical thoroughness which showed plainly that the matter was no jesting one.

At his command we descended to the ground, and stood in line before him. Next he told us to place our money and jewels upon the grass, which all did with a promptness that surprised me, though to be sure his pistols were a good stimulus to obedience.

But I, who had naught of money or jewels, stood watching these proceedings as if I had no part in them until, on a sudden, I felt the eyes behind the mask fixed upon me.

"How now, Mistress?" cried Master Deering. "Are you the only one unwilling to comply with my request?"

"Sir," father began, but the highwayman cut him short.

"Sir to you," he snapped angrily. "Have a care and be silent or I'll put a bullet through you."

"I have no money, and am too young for jewels," I hastened to tell the man, fearing that father would embroil himself on my account.

"Nay, I do not believe you," he answered roughly, at which Jimmy, ruffling like a turkey-cock, jumped in front of me.

"You are not to talk in that way to Charlotte,"

he cried. "She says she has naught, so it must be true."

"Oh, ho! And what business is that of yours, my young game chicken?" demanded Dick Deering, with a smile showing beneath the silk mask.

"'Tis all my business," answered Jimmy. "I must take care of her. 'Twas General Washington's order."

"Washington!" echoed the highwayman astounded. "Are you from the Americas?"

"Aye, to be sure. All of us," answered Jimmy proudly.

"In that case, sir," said Master Deering, turning to father, "take up your purse. I would not filch a farthing from one of those who have been robbed, aye and better robbed, already by the King's command."

There was not a man in the party more astonished at this clemency on the part of Master Dick Deering than father; but he needed no second invitation to gather up his gold.

A few minutes later we were ordered back into the coach and set upon our way with no more harm done than the loss of a few jewels and some money. The booty however was meagre enough, for it transpired that our fellow passengers always feared something of the kind upon their travels and carried as little as might be with them, some even going so far as to have purses of Brummagem with which to satisfy such sudden demands.

But this adventure with the highwayman loosed all tongues, as if indeed he had made us known the one to the other. The discovery that father was from the Americas provoked a discussion upon politics, and, to my amazement, the King and his ministers were roundly rated for their treatment of the Colonies. Nor was father less astonished to find he won but slight sympathy for his loyalty. Rather was there a scornful surprise that he, being from the Colonies, should side with the Crown.

"I tell you, sir," said one old man, who sat bundled up in a corner, "you'll find small favour for your loyal sentiments hereabouts. England's sons are every ready to shed their blood for England, but 'tis vastly different in this affair. 'Tis a Court war, sir, and by no means popular with the people. The City of London has protested solemnly against it again and again. In January 'twas said that fifteen officers of the guard resigned rather than fight against the Provincials. And right they were, say I!"

I, who had looked to hear naught but Tory talk in England, found more good staunch Whigs expressing their opinion without fear than ever I had at home.

We reached London late in the evening without further mishap or adventure, and went directly to the New England Coffee House in Threadneedle Street, its name having such a nice, homelike sound that I begged father to go there when he discussed

the matter of lodgings with one of our fellow-travellers.

It was comfortable enough, but father had no intention of staying long at an inn, so the next day he found a neat boarding-place on Craven Street not far from St. James's Park where Jimmy and I could take the air when we were so minded.

Once settled here under the eye of Mrs. Moppet, our landlady, father set out upon the business that had brought him to London, so that our days were passed in much the same way as they had been in Boston.

My first desire was to keep the promise I had given Cecelie to seek out Madam Pemberton as soon as might be, and to this end I consulted Mrs. Moppet upon the best way to reach the address in Clarges Street. It was within easy walking distance, and our landlady having given us plain directions, we found the house without mishap, though I was once forced to ask my way.

Madam Pemberton was at home and gave us a hearty welcome. She was as dear and sweet as Cecelie had described her, so that my heart was won at once.

"My dear child," she said, after our first greetings were over, "I'm so glad to see you. In truth I've worried more about you than I can say. We had a letter from Cecelie long since, telling us of your coming; but, though I made inquiries, I could

get no word of you. Sit down now and let me know everything."

With Jimmy's help I told her as well as I could all about our life in Boston, at least that part of it which was associated with Cecelie. She questioned me about this or that small detail of our doings in order, as she explained with a laugh, "that I can picture the dear girl among the Indians."

"But Cecelie had ne'er seen an Indian when we left," I protested; which Madam Pemberton could scarce believe, thinking, as did most Londoners, that Boston was inhabited in the main by savages dressed in beads and feathers.

But I was not the only one who had news to give. Madam Pemberton read me a letter from Cecelie, writ while they were in Halifax. She complained that they were most uncomfortable, the town being all too small to accommodate the host Mr. Howe had brought with him, and that there was much sickness.

"Mr. Howe," she ended, "likes not poor quarters, so we shall soon be on the move, thank goodness."

Thus we talked on for an hour or more, one thing leading to another, until I began to wonder whether or no I should see Philip. I had always thought of him as an excellent playmate for Jimmy, Cecelie having spoken of him as the baby of the family, so 'twill not be hard to imagine my embarrassment

when a tall, sturdy young man, at least a year my senior, burst into the room just home from his tutor.

"I'm right glad to see you," he exclaimed heartily, when his mother had made us known to him. "Cecelie has writ so much about you that we feel as if we had known you a long time," and he held out his hand to me.

I must have blushed dreadfully in my surprise; but Philip seemed to take no notice, turning his attention at once to Jimmy.

"And this is the rebel, hey?" he cried, a greeting which won the boy's heart upon the instant.

My shyness soon passed. No one could know Philip Pemberton without liking him, and I was glad to learn that he was fully recovered of the illness, which had kept his mother in England to nurse him.

Jimmy and I took leave of them shortly thereafter, and that night I penned a long letter to Cecelie, giving her our number in Craven Street.

"To-day I have visited your mother," I wrote. "She was most kind, and I love her already. As to Master Philip, you will be glad to know he is well and seemed greatly taken with Jimmy. I have seen naught of your London as yet but I can tell you already that I would rather be at home in Elmtree than in this great city. Philip is to show us the sights. Please, I beg, send me your news. 'Twill be a delight to hear from you and like a breath of fresh air from the Americas. I hope Philip likes me. Good night."

CHAPTER XXIII

HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE III

IT must have been because of Cecelie that Madam Pemberton was so kind to us. She and Philip came to our lodgings the next day, and from then on she interested herself in our welfare with such a whole-hearted good will that I realized something of what I had missed in my own life.

“You must let me play the part of mother to you, Charlotte, my dear,” she said, taking me in her arms. “’Twill be a kindness to me, seeing that my own daughter is so far away.”

’Twas in that spirit she treated me and, had I been in truth her own child, I could not have loved her more than I learned to do in the weeks that followed. To father also she opened her house, inviting him to meet certain gentlemen whose influence she hoped might further his mission, though she had small faith in its success as I shall presently relate.

With Philip we soon became fast friends, calling each other by our first names as if we had been well acquainted all our lives. He came nigh every afternoon when his lessons were over, and on his holidays he guided us to distant parts of the town, so that in

time we learned to know it fairly well, though I must admit that I never felt at home there.

Nor can I say that I liked aught about London. There was ever a pall of smoke from the pit coal burned in the city that hid the heavens, and though the weather might be fine and clear, the sun shone upon us with but a weak and sickly ray.

Then too the crowds of people in the streets amazed and frightened me. Particularly was this true of the Strand, where I was jostled about like a pea in a pod. I was not used to have a dirty sweeper brush a path for my feet at a crossing and hop back to my side ere I had taken a step, with a hand crooked for alms. It confused me mightily to have a man shouting in one ear, "Pots to mend!" while the other was nigh cracked with cries of "Sweet lavender and rosemary!" Nor did I ever become indifferent to the shop-keepers at their doors yelling, "Rally up! Rally up! Buy! Buy! Buy!" each trying to outdo his neighbour; while hucksters, praising their own furmity, fried fish or hot peasecod, stuck trays under my nose and barred the way.

All this would have made me give the Strand a wide berth without the added horrors of Temple Bar and the heads that topped the pikes above it. These were more than I could bear, and they made it plain to me that the gay figure dangling from the gibbet, which I had seen on the Dover road, had once been a man and was not the effigy of straw I had imagined. It was all too horrible, and I could

not but wonder how the King could allow such a thing to remain in the heart of the city; and I said as much to Philip.

"They have been there since 1745," he told me. "They were the last of those who supported the Stuarts and are meant as a warning to the treasonous. King George had naught to do with it."

"But he could order them down!" I burst out, nigh crying, and wishing myself back in my own fair land where no such dread sights existed. "Were he a good king he would have need of no such warnings."

I think Phil was a little surprised at my heat over the matter, for he said naught further on the subject. But his indifference set me thinking, and I concluded that, like the other people in London, he had become so familiar with that grim sight that he no longer noticed it. Indeed it seems that one may grow used to anything, but as for me I went not to the Strand again of my own desire.

In the mornings, of clear days, Jimmy and I explored the parks near us, and as we became more and more at home we even adventured as far as the Green Park where the Royal Family were wont to take the air.

We saw them first one afternoon, returning from a drawing-room, as we walked along the Hyde Park wall toward the turnpike.

Though I had learned a verse at school which recited that "Queens and Kings are gaudy things,"

yet was I most curious to see these same personages, and gazed with interest at the many ladies and gentlemen who, upon this occasion, formed a lane down which their Royal Highnesses were carried, the Queen in an open chair with two bearers, His Majesty in a sedan chair with a crown a-top. To my unpatriotic and prejudiced eyes the King was a most common-looking individual; for he was very fat, with great bulging eyes like a tomcod. His appearance, though he was dressed bravely in a fine, light cloth suit with silver buttons, and lace ruffles, gave little excuse for all the bowing and scraping with which he was greeted. I could not but laugh to myself that I had mistaken Mr. Washington for so undistinguished a figure.

Nor was I more impressed by the Queen. She was tricked out in a lemon-coloured flowered silk, but in taste and fashion she was not the equal of many of the ladies who curtsied humbly at sight of her, and I felt no thrill of pride when I remembered that I was her namesake.

In this wise did the months of our stay in London pass. Now and then there were special excursions into the country, and once father took us to see Mr. Garrick in a play, which was very exciting.

At Madam Pemberton's house I saw Mr. Walpole and Mr. Fox, among other distinguished people; and had the circumstances been different, I should have been able to look back upon that time

in London with some pleasure; but my anxieties gave me little spirit for enjoyment.

No letters came to us from Aunt Nabby, and we knew not how she and Jane fared. Of the war we heard only news of British victories, and at each fresh battle my heart ached for word of Ethan's safety. Yet the hardest trial to bear was the sight of father struggling vainly to accomplish his purpose, and, after months of patient effort, no nearer his goal than when he came. As it was in Boston, so was it here in London. After days and days of waiting he would at last meet one of the King's ministers only to be ridiculed or railed at for an impudent busybody. And at last, when spring had come again, he had seen all those in authority who could serve his purpose. There was left only the King himself. In him father still believed implicitly, and he determined not to relinquish his purpose until he had spoke His Majesty face to face.

But this design he could in no wise accomplish, and he so brooded and grieved over this inability that I feared mightily he would fall into a decline. Again he grew silent and old-looking, creeping in and out of the house with scarce a word to us. He ceased altogether from visiting Madam Pemberton's, for there he heard little to encourage him; indeed I think he shunned all people, fearing their talk would weaken his determination.

To Cecelie's mother, who was now as a mother to me, I opened my heart unrestrainedly, and she gave

me what comfort she could. She agreed with me that father was in a desperate state and that the only cure was a fulfilment of his desire.

"Not that it will do any good, Charlotte," she said. "Your father seems to be the only man in London who does not realize that it is the King alone who is making this war. Yet I fear that until His Majesty himself says the word your father will believe otherwise."

"And there is no way to bring them together," I sighed.

"None that I can see," she made answer. "My intimates are not of the Court party, and indeed His Majesty cares not for advice that runs counter to his own stubborn will."

There the matter seemed to be at a deadlock, and I had like to have despaired but for a resolve I had taken to speak to the King myself.

From this it will be seen to what a desperate pass I had come, for the only means by which I could hope to encounter His Majesty was by throwing myself in his way while he took the air in the Green Park. Nor did I hide from myself that I had need of all my courage, for I had seen the reverence paid here to the King and could not help but be somewhat in awe of his person.

Nevertheless I saw no other hope of restoring father's peace of mind and determined to put my plan through whatever the cost to myself might be.

And to this end Jimmy and I took our way to the Green Park, day after day, to lie in wait for the Royal Family. How I was to break through the lines of fine ladies and gentlemen who surrounded Their Majesties I knew not; but, as so often happens, one beautiful warm day in May an accident brought about what the wisest plans could not effect.

Jimmy and I were strolling about the park as usual, and upon turning a sharp corner in the path, came upon a broad lawn that had been hid from us by newly leaved bushes and trees. The first thing that attracted us was a dainty maid tossing a ball with two elegant ladies who were in attendance, and just as we neared them, the child made a wild throw which carried the ball in our direction.

Quick as thought Jimmy was after it, and running back to where the three stood, doffed his hat to the ladies most politely; but instead of finishing his errand and returning to me, he took it upon himself to instruct the young miss in the art of her game.

"Sure there was never a girl who knew how to throw a ball!" he exclaimed cheerfully. "Let me show you how 'tis done."

Now I had a good notion who these people were to whom my small brother talked so familiarly, and hurried forward expecting the attendant ladies to interfere; but they, amused most like by the boy's action, made no move to stay him.

The little miss, however, was by no means en-

tertained, and drew up her small stature haughtily.

"Who is the rude boy?" she asked in a plaintive voice.

"Nay, I am not rude," answered Jimmy for himself.

"But I am the Princess Elizabeth," pouted the child with a proud toss of her head.

"And yet you cannot throw a ball!" Jimmy exclaimed, noticing naught of her offended dignity. "'Tis high time you learned, Princess or no. See, 'tis done like this," and he sent the ball flying across the lawn, running after it at top speed.

Between my desire to laugh at the amazement of the Princess, and my embarrassment at finding myself in such company, I could do naught but blush. Nor was I reassured to hear a man's voice behind me speaking truculently.

"How now! How now! What's this? What's this?" it asked, and I turned to find myself in the presence of the King, backed by many ladies and gentlemen of his Court. Evidently they had crossed the lawn silently from an embrasure in the surrounding foliage.

But the King paid no heed to me. His gaze was fixed upon Jimmy who had returned with the ball.

"He is a most rude boy, Your Majesty," whimpered the Princess, going to the King's side. "He says I cannot throw a ball — and he ne'er bowed once to me."

"What mean you, boy?" demanded the King.

"Have you no manners? Know you not the proper way to treat a princess?"

"Sir, I did but think to do her a kindness," replied Jimmy promptly. "'Tis plain she cannot throw a ball, and —"

"Silence!" cried the King in a temper, opening wide his fish-like eyes.

"Please, Your Majesty," I hastened to say, stepping forward and curtsying low before him, "I and my brother are from the Americas and know little of etiquette."

"Aye, that I can well believe," growled the King. "'Tis not in America that one learns what is due to me and my family. But these stiff-necked rebels will learn, they will learn!" he ended, half mumbling the words to himself.

But here I saw an opportunity to say what had been in my mind and I meant not to let it slip.

"Please, Your Majesty," I began again, curtsying once more in the hope that it would placate him, "my father is a staunch Loyalist. He named me for the Queen, and he has come to England to tell Your Majesty how the war may be ended."

"Oh, has he, indeed!" exclaimed the King. "There are some hundreds of needy Provincials looking to that same end. Belike he seeks rather support from my privy purse, giving his loyalty as an excuse to fleece me of my money. But tell him he wastes his time. I have no more gold to give."

"Nay, Your Majesty," I said quickly, "he seeks

not money. Indeed he is more like to give all he has to end the war."

"Give? Give?" repeated the King, plainly surprised. "Is there a man from that wretched country willing to give? 'Tis a species of Colonial new to me. Tell me, child, is your father a man of substance?"

"I think so, Your Majesty," I answered as confidently as I could. "We children want for naught, and though father boasts not of such matters, I know that among his neighbours he is accounted rich."

"Humm! Humm!" muttered the King. "What is your father's name, child, and where does he live?"

"James Morton, is his name, Your Majesty," I answered, "and we lodge with Mrs. Moppet in Craven Street."

"Put it down. Put it down," he ordered a gentleman at his elbow, who wrote at once upon an ivory tablet. "Tell your father, child," the King went on, turning again to me, "to hold himself in readiness ere I send for him," and with a nod to his suite to follow, he walked away.

As for me I could have shouted for joy. At last father was to have his wish.

CHAPTER XXIV

A LETTER FROM AMERICA

IF naught else had come of our adventure with the King the sight of father's delight when I told him of it, it would have repaid my efforts. But at first he could scarce take it in.

"You spoke to the King in the park?" he repeated, as if the words were unbelievable.

"Aye, Father, and he said you were to hold yourself in readiness against his sending for you," I told him over and over again.

"You haven't dreamed it, child?" he asked with pitiful anxiety.

"Nay, Father, 'tis exactly as I have recounted it to you," I assured him. "You are to see the King."

"At last! At last!" he exclaimed when at length he was convinced. "Now will this cruel war be ended, Charlotte, and you will have played a brave part to bring it about. The King will hear reason in spite of all his enemies say of him."

As flowers lift their heads and grow freshly green after a rain, so father seemed to recover his spirits at the expectation of this summons to see the King. Once more he took an interest in what went on about

him and laughed with us as he had in those good years at Elmtree.

But, though we looked for the King's messenger from hour to hour, he came not for several days, and in the meantime there arrived a long letter from Cecelie, dated more than six months before which contained both good and bad news. Here it is, and 'twill be easy to understand what were my feelings as I read it:

“Dearest Charlotte: Through the courtesy of your brother, Captain Morton, I am sending this into the British lines under a flag of truce, hoping it may be forwarded to you at an early date. That you will be surprised to find me among the Continental army I know, but I will explain as well as I can.

“Since the battle of White Plains I have not seen father. This news I ask you to break to my dear mother for me. I have not the heart to write it to her, and as she loves you as a daughter, for so she has written and I can well believe it, the blow to her will be softened if you are there to give the news gently. This will make you think that father is dead but of that I am unconvinced.

“After the battle, when he did not return, I found that he was neither among the killed nor wounded nor was he reported with the captured. There was left the possibility that he had been taken prisoner by the Provincials and for some reason had concealed

his identity; but I could not be content to live on in such uncertainty so I have set out to find him.

“My hardest task was to get through our own lines, and I was balked of my purpose many times, but by a lucky chance I slipped past, only to be captured by an American outpost the moment I had crossed the neutral territory between the two armies.

“Had I been quite frank and told the soldiers of my errand they would doubtless have given me my liberty, but fearing to be turned back I invented a story which sounded improbable enough even to my own ears. And it was not believed for one of the soldiers cried out! ‘She’s a spy!’

“‘Nay,’ answered his fellow with a laugh, ‘’tis more like she seeks a sweetheart. Take her to headquarters.’

“Now that remark, Charlotte dear, put into my mind a tale that might pass; and, though I said it not in so many words, I let it be understood that I sought my betrothed.

“I cared not so long as I found father what silly thing these soldiers might think, and so when I was asked who the young man was I answered ‘Ethan Morton,’ quite boldly, knowing the name of no other Provincial soldier, and hoping they would let me go with no more said. But again they questioned me, fearing I was a spy, and so, to prove my words, I showed them the locket in which was your brother’s picture, having kept it by me lest it be lost. This nigh convinced them, but to make all

certain they sent for Captain Morton, who was stationed nearby.

"Imagine my feelings, Charlotte, as I awaited his coming, remembering that he had never seen me in his life. I pictured him saying he knew naught of me, and that I should be disgraced and discredited.

"I hope, my dear, you may never be in like case, for I ne'er passed so uncomfortable an hour. But think of my surprise and delight when at length he came, for he declared at once that he would, 'be glad to vouch for Mistress Pemberton.'

"Heard you ever the like, Charlotte? I could say naught, but stood mantling like a ninny. And how think you he knew who I was? Can you not guess how it came about that Captain Morton recognised a maid he had never seen? Well, he showed me afterward the sketch you made of me in Boston. Do you not recall it?

"I have much to thank you for, Charlotte. Through you I have fallen among friends and your brother has made smooth my way. To-morrow he takes me to Mr. Washington, where, he assures me, I shall obtain permission to go where I will.

"Now you know all my story. I have set it out clear so that you and mother may not be anxious for my safety. As to father, I will not believe he is dead, and I pray you, Charlotte, do your best to bring mother to this view of it. Farewell, my dear. I wish I could see you all again in this beautiful country. I think of you as a sister I love,

otherwise I would not ask you to face what I know will be no easy task.

“Your very loving,
“Cecelie.”

At the end of this letter I knew not whether to laugh or to cry. I could not help but rejoice to learn that Ethan was safe and well; on the other hand I grieved at the news of Colonel Pemberton's disappearance, and realized how sad a task had been set for me. Then, too, I marvelled at the strange part played by the sketches I had drawn, in bringing my brother and Cecelie together. Truly it cannot be told how much the smallest of our acts may influence future events.

Father made no comment when I read him the letter, except to express sorrow for Madam Pemberton's anxiety, but I knew he was as glad as I to have any word of Ethan. Jimmy, child-like, was most impressed by the fact that his big brother had been made a captain; but with the pride he took in it, there was also some evidence of discontent with his own situation.

“See what a chance I'm missing, Sharly,” he complained. “I might have been a colonel had I but seen active service.”

I delayed not in going to Madam Pemberton, though indeed my steps lagged as I neared the house. I puzzled to find words that might ease the shock of my news; but I fear I was a clumsy messenger.

Still my being there was some help I hope, for when at last the story was out, she took me in her arms and drew me close to her while the tears trickled down her face.

"And my brave Cecelie is all alone," she faltered at length.

"Nay, she may have found Colonel Pemberton ere this," I said, trying to hearten her. "And beside, Ethan will see that she is well cared for."

"Oh, Charlotte, my dear, you are helping me to be brave, too," she cried, drying her eyes. "Come, we will have no more tears. I must take thought upon what is best for me to do. I feel that I should like most to go to join Cecelie."

But ere Madam Pemberton came to a definite decision she determined to consult her brother, Lord Cutting, and to that end she and Philip left London that afternoon for Suffolk. Thus it came about that I was without the help of my good friends at a most critical period of my life.

The next day brought the long-expected summons from the King. At last father had been granted a private audience, and he went away rejoicing, happy in the anticipation of a successful end to his mission.

Wishing to learn the news of his visit to the court upon the moment of father's return, Jimmy and I stayed in the house, listening with what patience we could command, for the sound of his step upon the stair. Hour after hour passed with no sign of him

and I became uneasy, wondering if after all he had suffered another disappointment. Should he be put off again I dared not think of the consequences.

That afternoon at about three of the clock, I heard a sharp summons at the front door, and after a few moments' delay, Mrs. Moppet, looking very red-faced and flustered, ushered two strange men into our sitting-room.

The foremost of these visitors nodded to me indifferently and turned to the landlady.

"You may go," he said sharply, and without a word she left the room.

"What is it you wish?" I asked, facing them and putting an arm about Jimmy, for I liked not the look of these proceedings.

"Are you the daughter of one James Morton?" the man demanded, consulting a paper he held in his hand.

"Yes; what is it you want?" I inquired, a vague fear coming upon me.

"We are officers of His Majesty's Admiralty Court," he informed me in a dry, precise tone. "We are here to search for incriminating evidence against one James Morton who is now in custody, charged with being the owner by charter of the pirate vessel *Sally Slocum* recently taken by His Majesty's ship *Good Will*. I may say for your information that any interference with His Majesty's officers will lay you open to severe and condign punishment. Now, Bill, get to work," he ended,

suddenly addressing his companion without ceremony.

While the man had recited this speech to me as if he spoke a written piece, I had stood struck dumb with apprehension, nor did I come fully to my senses until the two had ransacked our rooms from top to bottom in so thorough a way that 'twas plain this was no new business to them. Having finished they left without a word, taking with them naught save a few old letters they found on father's writing-table.

"Jimmy!" I cried, when we were alone, "father has been arrested again. What shall we do?"

"We can do naught but wait until they let him out," answered the boy composedly. "Father has often spoke of English justice, and 'tis certain they will not keep him long, seeing that he had no hand in the *Sally's* turning privateer; but I am grieved to hear she is taken."

This view of the matter put me somewhat at ease. It would not be difficult, as I thought, for father to prove that he had objected to the *Sally's* prize-taking ventures. Major Trobridge could establish that in short order, and with this assurance to comfort me, I resolved to await the outcome as patiently as I knew how.

But another matter came now to plague me. Mrs. Moppet soon made her appearance.

"I'm not here to pry, child," she began. "'Tis little curiosity I have about my lodgers, but I like not the look of the officers of the law coming here.

'Twill give the house a bad name if 'tis known I harbour rebels from America."

"I'm the only true rebel here," declared Jimmy valiantly. "Father and Charlotte are loyal, and you may tell the King an it pleases you."

"Nay, I tell no tales," returned the landlady, "but I am a lone woman, with no one save myself to look after my interests."

"What is it you fear?" I asked.

"A fair question — and here's a fair answer," she replied. "What is to become of you young things an your father comes not back? Have you the means to pay for your lodging?"

Her brusque words brought home to me for the first time the fact that I had only a few shillings in my purse and, should father be detained for long, Jimmy and I would be in sad case. But I had no wish that Mrs. Moppet should have any inkling of this at present.

"At least you have no cause to worry yet," I told her, as coolly as I might. "Your rent has been paid for a week in advance."

"Aye, but four days of that week are gone, miss," she answered with truth. "Nor do I think of myself alone in speaking to you. 'Tis not always a kindness to let folk dream along till the last minute. Warn in time, say I — so till Friday, miss, the score is paid. After —" she shrugged, "I will look to you for my money." And with her usual curtsy she went away.

CHAPTER XXV

A MAN TO SELL A PARROT

I OPENED my eyes on Friday morning, knowing that unless something unforeseen happened Jimmy and I would have no roof over our heads that night. No word had come from father, though we had scarce left the house for fear news might arrive when we were away.

In Clarges Street where I made a hurried visit every day, the servants knew not when Madam Pemberton would return.

At breakfast Mrs. Moppet looked grim enough, yet she said naught, her money not being due her till dinner-time. Guessing what was in her thoughts, I felt it unlikely that she was at all deceived as to the true state of our finances.

I was well aware that father had a man of business somewhere in London, but what his name was or where he might be found I knew not. The possibility of our being separated from father had never entered our heads, so now there was no one to whom I could look for help.

The morning meal ended, Jimmy and I returned to our sitting-room to take up the weary task of waiting. I was without hope, yet for Jimmy's sake

I meant when the time came to throw myself upon Mrs. Moppet's mercy. It went sorely against my inclination to sue to her, nor did I expect any consideration, yet it was all I could see to do.

Near ten o'clock I was about to make ready for another call in Clarges Street in hope of news, when Sally, the slavy, knocked at the door.

"A man to see you," she announced, and scarce able to restrain a cry of joy I ran to the lower hall followed by Jimmy.

But one glance at the individual who awaited me, ended all expectation of help from him. He was a burly man, dressed in greasy fustian and with a red cloth knotted at his throat. He looked not at all the sort of person father would select for a messenger, and almost sick with disappointment I asked his business.

"I've a werry fine parrot, miss," he began, "vonderful talker she is, and I'll sell 'er cheap."

He spoke in a high, whining voice, and the whites of his eyes glinted strangely in his purple face. As he rambled on he glanced meaningly toward the door of Mrs. Moppet's parlour, which stood slightly ajar.

My first impulse was to dismiss him curtly; but there was something in his roving glance that restrained me.

"I've no liking for parrots," I said at length.

"Then vot say you to a yellow bird from the Canaries?" he proposed, his eyes still riveted upon

the parlour door. "Like enough 'twould be more to a young missy's fancy."

"I have no wish to buy a bird of any kind," I answered, fast losing patience.

"Vite mice then for the little gentleman," he suggested, with a nod of his head toward Jimmy. "Or a rat now? I've a werry promisin' young un. Eat from your 'and, 'e vill, and I'll let 'im go at a bargain."

"Oh, I'd love to have a rat, Sharly," Jimmy exclaimed excitedly. "Buy him for me. Please do. Think what fun I'd have with Aunt Nabby and Mrs. Moppet."

At that Mrs. Moppet's head shot out of her door like a jack-in-the-box.

"I'd have you remember, miss, that this house is no menagerie," she announced vehemently, and popped back again.

As our landlady's face disappeared the man deliberately winked at Jimmy.

"It's werry 'ard on a poor cove," he whined, "ven even the gentry from overseas don't take no interest in a' eddicated bird like my parrot vvhich it can say in two languiches, 'Meet me in the Mall. Meet me in the Mall,' as nat'ral as vot I can." And with another atrocious wink at Jimmy he started toward the street door.

"What two languages does it speak?" demanded Jimmy, following.

"Hinglish and Hamerican, o' course," he answered, and went out.

Back in our room Jimmy closed the door softly behind him.

"Get ready at once, Sharly," he whispered, his ear to the crack.

"For what?" I demanded, in no wise comprehending his mysterious actions.

"To 'Meet me in the Mall,' " he replied, copying the man's tone to the life. And then I caught a glimpse of the truth.

"Do you think —" I began.

"Why, of course!" He interrupted. "Don't be stupid, Charlotte. Can't you see he has a message for us that he doesn't want Mrs. Moppet to hear? He's a very smart gentleman if he made up that story of the parrot. Hurry now!"

I needed no further urging, and a minute or two later found us on the streets hastening toward Hyde Park. As we reached the Mall it looked so deserted that my heart sank until I caught sight of a red kerchief, half hid by some bushes, and knew the man awaited us.

We came up with him on a side path and once more he and Jimmy exchanged winks as if to say they understood each other perfectly.

"'Tis fine the vay you understand the parrot languich, miss," the man said, plainly intending to be complimentary.

" 'Twas my little brother took your meaning," I explained. "Have you a message for me?"

"Aye," he answered, looking about him suspiciously, "it vas give me in a song, as you might say, out of a vinder with bars across, and it seemed urgent, too."

"Tell me," I begged impatiently.

"Vell, miss, 'tvas like this," he began. "I vas standin' outside the jail — or it might 'ave been the vordon's 'ouse, miss, ven I 'eard a visperin' above my head. ' 'Ist! 'Ist!' it said, and I leans against the vall and pulls out my pipe, though I 'ad naught to fill it vith. 'Go on,' I answers, blowin' through the stem. 'Go on. I'm listenin'.'"

"Oh, what did he say?" I pleaded.

"Naught then, missy," the man went on, "for some one comes into 'is room and I, 'earin' another woice, pressed close to the vall so as not to be seen. After a bit, my friend above comes back to the vinder, but instead of talkin' 'e begins a singin' like. 'Are ye there?' were the first vords, and then a lot o' stuff about 'loved one, 'ear me,' which I sees the meanin' of fast enough. He's a cute one, this pal o' yours, miss."

"Oh, but what is the message?" I implored, scarce able to restrain myself.

"Nay now, missy, it come a bit at a time, as I'm tryin' to tell you," answered the man. "He kep' up that qveer singin' to befool the guard, I misdoubt me; but 'ere's vhat I got out of it. 'Tell Miss

Morton, lodgin' in Craven Street vith Mrs. Mopet, to go to Gerald Bender in Broom Street!' That's all, miss, but from the vay he kept repeatin' it, twistin' it hin and hout, o' the song, I took it to be main himportant, and so I comes to you as qvick as I could."

"Oh, thank you," I cried gratefully. "'Tis my father who is kept a prisoner, but how can I reward you?"

"'Arf a sov'll about pay the shot, missy," he answered, with a covetous gleam in his eyes.

"But I've naught but a few shillings," I told him in despair.

"Mayhap this Gerald Bender vill 'elp you out, missy," he suggested. "'Tis not Bully Munch would press a lydy for 'is pay, though 'tis fair earned."

"If you will but show me the way to Broom Street I'll pay you gladly," I answered. "I think this Mr. Bender must be father's man of business, and if that is so I shall get what gold I need."

"Right-o," said Bully Munch, "but I like not these men o' business, though I'll set you on your vay there. But come back to the Mall 'ere in the mornin' and I'll meet you vonce more."

Under Bully Munch's directions Jimmy and I took a hackney coach to Broom Street and there, in front of a gloomy building, I parted with my last shilling to pay a grumbling driver for our ride. What would become of us now if this Mr. Bender

lent us not the help we needed I dared not think.

I knocked upon the door which bore Gerald Bender's name in letters which had once been yellow but were now a faded mud-colour, much scratched and besmeared. The paint had the look of long service and from it I guessed that I should find an old, old man.

But my knock brought no response, and with a sinking heart I rapped once more.

On the instant, as if he had waited for the second summons, the door opened and a strange-looking old man stood before me. One, indeed, who seemed a caricature of what I had expected.

His wig, which was large even to my provincial eyes, was set awry and behind each ear he held a huge quill pen. His nose carried great circular eye-glasses of horn, placed upon the very tip, over which he gazed upon me with a frown.

"This is no place for children," he said, gruffly, without waiting for me to speak, and he would have closed the door had not Jimmy sprung forward and stopped him.

"But I'm come on a most important matter that will not wait," I stuttered, aghast at such a reception. "Are you Mr. Bender?"

"Na, na!" he replied briskly, as if the notion was not to his liking. "Na, na, child, do not think to befool me. After office hours you may come again. I doubt not your affairs will keep till four o'clock," and he made once more as if to shut the door.

But by now I was fully aroused.

"I shall see Mr. Bender!" I declared, and on a sudden pushed in through the door, with Jimmy at my heels.

I found myself in a fair-sized but rather dark room, furnished with two or three high desks which were unoccupied.

"How now!" cried the old man. "Would you break into this office by force?"

"I *must* see Mr. Bender," I repeated, meaning not to give up my purpose. "Tell me where I can find him?"

I think the old clerk saw that I was desperate, for after a moment's hesitation he grudgingly bade me wait, and disappeared through a door at the rear of the room. Almost immediately he returned with a gruff word for us to follow him.

He led us into a small passage which brought us to another entrance.

"Go in there," he growled, and left us forthwith.

Not without some trepidation, for this reception had disconcerted me, I turned the latch of the door and went in. The room in which we now found ourselves was smaller but quite bright and homelike for an office, and sitting at a desk fronting us was an elegantly dressed young man, who rose as we stopped upon the threshold.

"What can I do for you?" he asked pleasantly.

"I am looking for Mr. Gerald Bender sir," I answered. "I thought to find him here."

"I am Gerald Bender," the dandy returned with a smile. "Pray come in and sit down."

"But I thought—" I began, when he interrupted with a gay laugh.

"You thought I was an old man, because the sign on my door is aged," he said. "That was my good father's name as well as mine, so I practise economy in not changing it. Come now, what can I do for you?"

"I am Charlotte Morton, daughter of James Morton of Massachusetts," I began, looking to see if my words would bring the hoped-for recognition. Nor was I disappointed.

"I'm glad to see you, Mistress Morton," Mr. Bender said quickly. "My father and I have been your father's London agents for years. Is he ill? I have been expecting a visit from him for some days."

"He is in prison, sir," I answered, and then in a flood of words I poured out the whole story, glad to find one to whom I could unbosom myself.

He questioned me once or twice, and I could see his face grow grave as the details were revealed to him. At the end he rose and began pacing the floor slowly and thoughtfully.

"I cannot disguise that 'tis a serious matter, Mistress Morton," he told me at last. "The present state of the government is such that they listen not to reason; but I will go to your father at once, and take up the matter of his liberation with the proper

authorities. In the meantime I surmise that you need money for your expenses."

I had said naught of this, and was much relieved when he broached the subject himself.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Bender, I have no money at all, and to-day the rent is due, and I owe the man, Bully Munch, a half sovereign for bringing the news from father, and —"

He stopped me with a laugh.

"You will not lack for all you want," he broke in, and drew from his pocket a purse filled with gold coins. "Take this for the time being and we will provide for future needs as they arise."

"But I like not to take your money."

"Nay, 'twas mine, but 'tis now yours," he assured me politely, and then, as I would have expressed my thankfulness; "your father holds large credits with us, Mistress Morton, so this is but a matter of business."

"You are kind to put it in that way, Mr. Bender," I responded, "but indeed I am grateful for your help.— Now when will we see father freed?"

"Ah, that you must leave to me," he answered. "I shall go to him at once."

Mr. Bender escorted us to Craven Street and left us with the promise that he would keep us informed of how the business progressed.

Mrs. Moppet, who had doubtless been watching for our return, showed herself vastly impressed by the elegance of our new friend; but it was a great

relief to give her the money for another week's lodging. When she saw the gold counted out she grew voluble in her assurances that she had known all along that I would pay. Also she became very solicitous for our comfort, but I had little to say to her. I was certain it was the money and not kindness that had changed her bearing toward us.

Indeed I concerned myself little about her. Our visit to Mr. Bender had brought me a great measure of relief, but I should have been better pleased had he appeared more assured of father's prompt liberation.

To my great disappointment naught further did I hear that day, and the next morning, remembering my promise to meet Bully Munch in the Mall, I fared forth. A half sovereign, though doubtless high pay for the man's trouble, was little enough reward for the service he had rendered me, and I was anxious to discharge my debt.

I made no doubt he would be awaiting us, but although Jimmy and I loitered about the place for nigh two hours, expecting him to show himself at any moment, he failed to put in an appearance.

I thought this most surpassing strange and would have waited longer had not the hope that good news of father might have arrived in our absence driven me back to our lodgings.

Here I found only a note from Mr. Bender saying that as yet he had not been able to see father, and the day being Saturday, there was scarce any

likelihood that he could accomplish his purpose before Monday. In the meantime I was to count upon his exerting himself to the utmost, and should aught of importance arise he would at once communicate with me.

"We can but wait," said Jimmy plaintively. "I vow it would have been better had we ne'er spoke to your fat king."

"He's no king of mine," I made answer bitterly, "nor ever was."

"How now!" Jimmy exclaimed. "Did you mean what you said to Mr. Gage long ago? Are you not a Loyalist like father?"

"Nay, Jimmy, I am no Loyalist. I but let father think so to comfort him," I replied wearily.

"Well, at times I've suspected this," the boy murmured with a solemn shake of his head, "but one cannot guess at what a female may think by the way she acts."

There was naught then to do but wait, as Jimmy had said, and we put in the time as best we might. At Clarges Street the servants were still ignorant as to the day of Madam Pemberton's return, which was an added sorrow to me, seeing that I stood in need of a consoler. Nor did we see aught of Bully Munch, though we strayed about the Mall most of Sunday morning.

The next afternoon brought Mr. Bender in person to our lodgings.

"I'm sorry, Mistress Morton, that I have not

better news for you," were his first words, and my spirits sank like lead.

"But surely, sir, they cannot keep him there when he had naught to do with the *Sally* turning pirate?" I burst out.

"One would think not," he answered; "but you must consider that his name is signed to the *Sally's* papers as charterer. Advices from Mr. Howe in America will clear the matter up in time, but 'twill be months ere we can receive word from there."

"Major Trobridge can tell them all about it," I cried hopefully.

"I wish it were otherwise," Mr. Bender said with feeling; "unfortunately Major Trobridge has rejoined his regiment."

"Oh, poor father," I sobbed, my last hope gone. "If only I could go to him."

"I'm to take you to him at once," Mr. Bender told me, glad to have this much of comfort to offer. "I've been lucky enough to secure that permission in time. To-night he is to be removed from the warden's house to the prison. Will you make ready?"

Needless to say I did not dilly-dally, and we were soon upon our way in a coach Mr. Bender had provided.

At length, after a silent journey, we drove up beside a gloomy building, whose barred windows brought a pang to my heart.

We alighted, and on Mr. Bender's showing his

authority, were admitted. But though we tarried not, our progress seemed very slow to my impatient longings.

A guard, after unlocking numerous doors, led the way up a flight of stairs to a passage with rooms on each side. Before one of these we stopped and our guide with much rattling of keys finally unlocked and flung open the door so that I could look into the dark little cell.

There, bending over the table near the barred window, sat a figure that in its attitude seemed to express a world of sorrow. Its sloped and shrunken shoulders spoke of loneliness, despair and helplessness. My heart ached at sight of it and I ran forward in haste to offer comfort.

"Father!" I breathed, and would have flung my arms about that silent form, but at the first touch it fell off the chair to the floor.

"What is the matter?" I cried, starting back in fear.

Mr. Bender and the guard hurried up and the latter, with a gruff exclamation of anger, gave the huddled figure a violent kick.

"'Tis a dummy!" he shouted. "We've been tricked! The prisoner has escaped!"

CHAPTER XXVI

A LIBERATOR O' THE LANGUISHIN'

A MOMENT after the discovery that father was no longer in custody there was a great hubbub in the warden's house. The guard ran into the hall, calling loudly to his fellows, who soon crowded the room asking questions and examining the dummy with excited interest. Presently the warden himself appeared and began an inquiry, in which our party was subjected to considerable questioning.

Mr. Bender, however, took the matter with the utmost calm, and soon convinced that official that, whatever had happened, we were innocent of all complicity. Then we were permitted to go.

Throughout these proceedings I was in a daze. I knew not whether to be glad or sorry at father's escape. I rejoiced that he was free — but what had become of him? Not to know where he was, seemed more alarming than to have him in prison; for though in that case he was denied his liberty yet he was safe, the charge against him being a false one as would in time be proved. Now I pictured him in hiding, sought after high and low by the officers of the law who would soon be on his track.

Nor was Mr. Bender at ease over the matter.

"I pray your father may not be recaptured now, Mistress Morton," he remarked when we were out on the street. "His escape will appear to give point to the accusations against him, and in these times of war the authorities do not always wait for positive proof of guilt."

"What mean you?" I asked, made anxious by his tone.

"To be plain, he will be branded a spy," was the answer, "and I cannot deny that a good case might be made against him. His activities since he has been in London have been most persistent."

"But all he has done has been for the King," I protested.

"Aye, *we* know that," Mr. Bender replied, "but 'twill be hinted his loyalty is but a mask, and that he wished to gain information under the cloak of his services to the Crown."

Even I could see that what he said was indeed possible. In spite of all rebuffs, father had held to his purpose with stubborn energy, and his enemies might say that no man would have continued to serve a cause with so little encouragement.

"What can we do?" I asked hopelessly.

"Naught for the moment," answered Mr. Bender. "We must leave it to Mr. Morton to make the next move. He may go to your lodgings by night, and it is on that account I have put the seriousness of his position before you. You must point

out to him the risks he will run if he remains in London. Your father is no coward, and knowing his own innocence he may brave the consequences of recapture in order to care for you and your little brother. Moreover, he has a confidence in English justice which, in this crisis, I regret to say I do not share."

"Yes," I put in, "he has often spoke as if no man need fear the law in England unless he broke it."

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Bender; "so you see, should he come to you, he must be warned of what may be in store for him."

Mr. Bender left us at our lodgings, having made himself responsible for our care and safety, and indeed on that score I had already ceased to worry. The fate of father had put all lesser anxieties out of my thoughts.

I spent a miserable night, dreaming, during my fitful slumbers, of father struggling in a net held by laughing pigmies; and anon, waking with a start, thinking I heard his footsteps creeping up the stairs to our room.

But the day finally dawned and with it came a welcome surprise. Shortly after breakfast Philip Pemberton rushed into our sitting-room in the gayest of spirits.

"Charlotte," he cried, "what think you has happened? We arrived from Suffolk last night and I could scarce wait to tell you. Mother and I are going to the Americas to join Cecelie."

"I wish I were going," I said, longing for Elm-tree bringing the hot tears to my eyes.

"Perchance you will," he went on excitedly. "Mother proposes to ask Mr. Morton if you and Jimmy cannot join us. But what's the matter," he ended, noticing for the first time that something was amiss.

I told him a little of what had happened since he went away, but the whole tale of woe he heard later when I poured out my heart to his mother.

We went to Clarges Street almost at once, and oh, how glad I was for the full measure of sympathy Madam Pemberton gave to me.

"My poor, dear child," she murmured, patting me lovingly as I sobbed upon her shoulder. "What a sad, anxious time you have had of it. And I away, too. My poor Charlotte!"

Her tenderness brought a flood of tears that eased the bitter ache in my heart and brought me new courage to face my troubles.

"But your father must soon let you have word of how he fares," she said, when I had recovered somewhat of my composure.

"Yes, unless he's in hiding and dare not show himself," I replied, nigh to tears again at the thought. "Not to be able to do aught but sit and wait is what makes it so hard," I added.

"Aye, that is true, my dear," agreed Madam Pemberton. "Now let us consider where we stand. My brother has gone to Dover to arrange for a

vessel that will land us in France where we can take ship for the Colonies. I care not to sail upon one of our transports, and I had hoped Jimmy and you would go with us."

"Oh, I would love to go," I replied, "but I couldn't desert father."

"No, of course you couldn't," said Madam Pemberton. "Well, I don't propose to leave you like this."

"But you mustn't change your plans on my account, Madam Pemberton," I protested.

"Nay, my child," she answered, "a few days will make no difference, one way or the other. It means only that I must curb my impatience a little. Besides, Charlotte, it is the fact that Cecelie is under the protection of your brother Ethan that makes my anxiety bearable. Surely I can do no less than cherish his sister."

It was decided finally that no change should be made in Madam Pemberton's arrangements, for we could not rid ourselves of the hope that at any moment word might come from father. Philip wished us to leave our lodgings and stay with them in the meantime, but his mother agreed with me that I had best remain where I was, expecting that some message would be sent there.

With this thought in mind we left Clarges Street, and it was with a considerably lighter heart that I hurried back to Mrs. Moppet's. True, the situation was in no way changed, but I felt less alone

with the Pembertons at hand to help me in case of need.

We were just about to enter the house when a small and very dirty street urchin ran up to us.

"Please, missy," he said, touching his forehead, "do you live 'ere?"

"Yes," I answered.

"And 'ave you got a sixpence?" was his next question.

"Yes," I told him, "but I can't give sixpence to every beggar I meet. I'll give you tuppence," I added, opening my purse.

"Nay," retorted the lad, "'e said you'd give me sixpence."

"Who did?" I asked with growing curiosity.

"The cove what said he 'ad a parrot what talked in two languiches," replied the boy, and then he winked at me in a way that showed this, too, was a part of his message.

"Did he tell you what the parrot said?" I fair stammered in my eagerness.

"Aye — but don't you believe it, missy," he returned shrewdly, "what them forring birds mostly says ain't fit for no lydy to 'ear."

"Tell me what it was?" I demanded, nigh distracted with excitement.

"Well, you carn't blyme me for not warnin' of you," the boy answered. "The cove 'e tells me the parrot says, 'Meet me in the Mall.' Now give me the sixpence."

I handed him a shilling and, without waiting for his thanks, took Jimmy by the hand and started, half running, for Hyde Park. Only Bully Munch could have sent that message.

We found him slinking inconspicuously behind some bushes. At sight of us he came forward, touching his cap to me and winking as usual to Jimmy, who did the like, as if this constituted a formal salutation.

"What of my father?" I asked breathlessly. "Is he safe?"

"Aye, safe as a church," he answered readily, and, fumbling in his pocket, he presently produced a letter which he handed to me. "That'll make ye easy hin your mind, I'm thinkin'."

I opened the crumpled envelope and read as follows:

"My dear daughter, when you receive this I shall be on my way to the port of Nantes in France, where I wish you and Jimmy to join me as soon as you are able. Mr. Gerald Bender, of Broom Street, will make the necessary arrangements for you. Give him this letter, which will constitute an authority for him to hand to the messenger who bears it the sum of fifty guineas in payment for services rendered. You will also obtain two hundred guineas in gold for our own needs, out of which you will discharge all indebtedness incurred during my absence. I

shall await your coming at the little hotel called the 'Lion d'Or.' You will have no difficulty in finding it, and I pray you tarry not. I shall be most anxious until you and Jimmy are with me once more. I would I could have spared you the pain and uncertainty you must have experienced, if you learned of my escape from the prison before this reaches you. But that was impossible. I shall try to make up to you, my dear Charlotte, for all the hardships you have endured so bravely and patiently since we started upon this disastrous adventure. Come to me as quickly as may be. I shall not rest easy till I hold you both in my arms again.

"Your loving father,

"JAMES MORTON."

"Oh, Jimmy," I cried, hugging the boy, "father is safe in France, and we are to go to him at once."

"Hurrah!" shouted Jimmy. "Perhaps he'll take us home."

But I dared not let my thoughts dwell on such happiness, and turned to Bully Munch.

"Will you go with us to Broom Street?" I asked. "Mr. Bender is to give you the fifty guineas father promised."

"Thank ye kindly, miss," he answered, "but if it ain't puttin' you to too great inconvenience I'd rather you'd fetch it 'ere. As it 'appens I ain't pushin' myself forrard, as you might say, seeing as

'ow the hofficers is a-lookin' 'igh and low for somebody to blyme. I'm vot you'd call tykin' a wacation, miss."

"Oh, of course," I exclaimed, realizing that he ran a danger of arrest for the part he had played in father's escape. "Will you wait here then, till I get the money?"

"Aye, that I vill," he answered. "'Tis a fine plyce to tyke the hair of a vorm d'y, and I'm not so pressed for tyme that a bit o' rest won't do me good."

"Very well," I agreed, "I'll go to Mr. Bender and hurry back. You're a very kind man to take such a risk for father. I am grateful to you."

"Lor' love you, miss," he replied, grinning sheepishly, "gettin' folks out o' tyte plyces is me tryde. 'A liberator o' the langvishin' ' I calls meself."

"Nevertheless, I'm very thankful to you," I insisted.

"So am I," Jimmy put in. "It took a clever man to fix up that dummy."

"Now there's the smart little nipper," cried Bully Munch, with an admiring glance at the boy, "but don't you be givin' me all the credit for the job. I wouldn't be surprised to 'ear that this ain't the fust tyme that same dummy 'as turned hup."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Vell, miss, it's like this," he explained. "The guards of any jyle must 'ave some vay of showin' 'ow the prisoner got away. That's only nat'ral."

"You mean the guard knew all about it?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"Now, miss, you wouldn't be expectin' me to arnswer that in no ways truthful, now vould you?" he asked, with a funny assumption of innocence. "'No, o' course not,' says you, but at the same tyme you'll be thinkin' that I've got a pal vot is a prison guard, an' a humaner cove than 'e is you'd never vish to see. It fair goes to 'is 'eart, miss, to vatch the sufferin' of a feller creature and I ain't sayin' but vot there's tymes 'is feelin's gets the best o' 'im, in a manner o' speakin'. Besides vvhich, 'e's got a family o' childern vot needs shoes and such lugsuries, not to mention the bread an' bloaters they're consumin' daily."

This long speech put a new light upon the manner of father's escape, but none the less was I grateful for the aid Bully Munch had given. He promised to await our return and off we started for a hackney carriage to take us to Broom Street in all haste.

Mr. Bender was rejoiced at the news I brought, and attended promptly to supplying the money father had asked for. He understood our desire to be upon our journey with all despatch, and was even ready to escort us; but I was glad to relieve him of that necessity.

"We shall go with Madam Pemberton," I said, and explained her proposed trip.

"It will be fine to have an older lady with you,"

he answered, vastly relieved no doubt to be rid of the responsibility. Nevertheless, he called upon Madam Pemberton that evening to offer any service in his power.

He had given me the money for Bully Munch in a small packet, and the gold for father he had arranged in three little bags.

"I advise you to pack these in your boxes," he said. "The road to Dover boasts more than one highwayman."

And that reminded me of Master Dick Deering, whom we had met on our way to London; but I was too happy to borrow trouble.

We bade farewell to Mr. Bender and thanked him heartily for his labours in our behalf. He has always remained one of the few pleasant associations I have with that stay in London.

Back in Hyde Park we again met Bully Munch and handed him his gold.

"Thank you kindly, miss," he said, as he took it.

"That's all now, isn't it?" I asked, preparing to leave him.

"If you'll excuse me speakin' of it, miss," he returned, "there's a small matter of 'arf a sov, vot maybe you've forgot."

"To be sure," I cried, and sought the money in my purse.

"Right-o," he exclaimed, as I counted ten shillings into his hand. "All square now, and ven you're in Lunnon again and 'as need of a liberator

o' the languishin' I'll thank you kindly to remember Bully Munch."

"I certainly will," I answered with a smile, and would have left him, but Jimmy held back.

"Have you really a parrot that says, 'Meet me in the Mall'?" he asked, looking up at the man. "'Cause if you have I'd like to buy him."

"Now ain't 'e the hinqirin' little nipper?" exclaimed Bully Munch with a grin at me. "No, marster," he went on to Jimmy, "that bird ain't for syle. I needs 'im in me tryde, I do, for 'e's that talkative 'e don't confine 'isself to any one plyce. "'Cause why?' says you. 'Cause there's tymes when other plyces is more conwenient; then you'll 'ear 'im pype hup and s'y, 'Meet me in Soho,' or 'Am'stead 'Eath,' or 'The Strand,' all dependin' upon 'ow 'e's feelin'. No, marster, he ain't for syle."

"That parrot must be a very smart bird," said Jimmy, with a sigh of regret, as we parted from Bully Munch for good and all.

Straight to Clarges Street we went, and for the few minutes we stopped there to break the good news there was great rejoicing. We all talked at once, much excited at the prospect of our journey together, until Madam Pemberton reminded me that there was much to be done against our start for Dover in the morning.

"You'll go to the Americas with us yet, Charlotte!" Philip cried as we took our leave.

“Nay, I dare not think of that,” I answered, and hurried away.

The next few hours were spent in a scramble to pack our boxes. It was done somehow, but I fear not very neatly. Mrs. Moppet was paid a full week ahead, which changed her sour looks to something like a pleasant smile. Indeed I doubt not she told the truth when she regretted our going.

We were up betimes the next morning, and at length, after much hurry and bustle, we were all settled in the coach, each breathing a sigh of relief that we had not missed it.

Naught of particular interest happened on the way, no highwayman appeared to halt our progress, and at length we reached the little coast town to find Lord Cutting, Madam Pemberton's brother, waiting to see us embarked.

We had a fair passage and reached the French coast one evening as the sun was setting.

I had meant to make straight for the little hotel of which father had spoken in his letter, but there upon the quay he stood waving a hand to us. He, too, had been impatient, and had watched each incoming vessel with straining eyes. We were in his arms ere the boat was fairly at rest, but so full were our hearts that we could scarce utter a word. Indeed there were no words that would tell how glad we felt to be together again.

Madam Pemberton greeted father, and he, not knowing the circumstances, jumped to the conclusion

that she had made the trip solely on our account.

"How can I repay you, madam," he said, with a catch in his voice, "for the kindness you have shown my children in seeing them safe back to me?"

"Nay, they but accompanied us," she answered.

"We are come to take ship for the Americas."

"Indeed!" exclaimed father in surprise. "You will go to the most beautiful country in the world, madam. I rejoice at the opportunity I shall have to return your hospitality when we arrive."

"Oh, Father!" I cried, scarce daring to believe what his words implied. "Are we going, too?"

"Yes, my dear," he answered with a glad smile, "we are going home. Home to the Massachusetts. I would that I had never left it."

CHAPTER XXVII

HOME

THE good ship *Bel Esprit*, sailing for Boston, took us all back to the Americas. To me she was the most beautiful vessel I ever saw. I loved every inch of her white decks and lofty rigging. Little wonder that I had an affection for her, seeing that day by day she breasted the waves to carry me to the land my heart ached for. Truly she was a brave ship.

We were all comfortably bestowed in cabins surrounding a large roomy saloon, and save for our impatience to reach port there was naught of which we could complain.

But oh, how different was this trip from our previous voyage across the tumbling waters. Then we sailed through azure seas with light winds and heavy hearts; now the winds were heavy, the seas grey and cold, but our hearts were light and warm.

In father I was happy to note a great change. He was almost his old self again, yet not quite the same. It was plain he no longer harboured any delusions about the conflict between the Crown and our Colonies. Nor did he speak of peace. He

seemed more stern in his demeanour, as if he entertained a high resolve and but awaited the opportunity to practise it.

Of his arrest and his imprisonment he had little to say that I did not know already.

"There is no longer any justice in England," he told me upon one occasion, when we were alone together. "An honest man may lie in jail till he dies. Their judges are corrupt, their prisons will open to those who can pay, and liberty is but a word."

From this I guessed that he was well aware of the strange trade plied by Bully Munch, but I also knew that had he not despaired of a fair hearing he would have scorned to gain his freedom by such means.

I was most curious about his audience with the King, but it was soon evident that here was a subject upon which he was disinclined to talk.

"Did you see His Majesty?" I persisted.

"Aye," he said angrily, "I saw him — and was cured of a canker in the brain. He is no Englishman!"

This was enough to tell me how blew the wind in that quarter and I was somewhat put to it not to rejoice openly.

As we neared the coast the weather became warmer, and Madam Pemberton vowed she could smell the blossoms. Philip and I, sniffing the breeze eagerly, could detect naught, but a day later we had our first glimpse of the American coast, lying low

down on the horizon like a grey cloud, and in due time we passed Nantasket.

As we entered the bay, I was half way between laughing and crying for very joy at being home again.

And what a change had taken place since we had sailed out of Boston Harbour! Then the water had been black with troop-ships under the British flag. Now many trading-vessels lay at anchor; small boats darted busily here and there; and while we guessed that the heights were fortified, everything in the smiling scene before us spoke of peace and prosperity.

Ere the *Bel Esprit* reached her moorings, the port officials came aboard, and the officer in charge shook his head emphatically when he heard father's name.

"Are you the Loyalist, James Morton?" he demanded.

"I was a Loyalist," father replied, "but —"

"Nay, I need no explanations," growled the man roughly. "If you are not attainted you should be. We want no trimmers in this country. Go back to your king. You cannot land here!"

"But I have a son fighting in the Colonial army," cried father proudly.

"No doubt," answered the man scornfully. "Yours is not the only family that has a foot in each camp. Say no more, sir, you cannot land in Boston."

And there the matter would have ended, for the

officer prepared to go, leaving us within sight of home yet denied admission to our own country. But even as my spirits dropped in despair they rose again, for I remembered that in my cabin there was that which would put all right.

"Stay one moment," I called to the man, and ran below, returning quickly with a paper which I handed to father. It was the safe conduct given me by Mr. Washington, and when he saw what it was a smile of satisfaction came upon father's lips. He gave it to the officer without comment and immediately the man's manner changed.

"This puts a different face upon the matter, Mr. Morton," he said courteously, handing back the pass. "Why did you not show it to me in the first place?"

"To tell the truth," father replied, "I had clean forgot it, not realizing that a safe conduct would be necessary."

That ended our trouble, and we were soon ashore and on our way to Purchase Street. It was a new Boston that greeted us. Everywhere were signs of wealth, and King's Street was as full of people of all nations as the Strand or Cornhill.

Madam Pemberton had agreed with us that, until she had definite news of Cecelie, it would be well for her to accept the hospitality father was glad to extend. Moreover, we looked for a word of Ethan at home and doubted not he could give her the information she sought; so we all settled at Mrs. Phil-

brick's for the night, preparatory to making an early start for Elmtree the next day.

I have often thought since how brave Madam Pemberton was. She never put a damper on our spirits by a reference to the possible sorrow in store for her, and she was ever ready to join in our enthusiasm as each familiar sight came into view on our journey out of Boston.

And oh, how wonderful my own dear country looked to me when I gazed upon the sweep and swell of the broad fields stretching mile after mile before us as we topped some hill upon the road. By comparison England seemed cut into little bits, fit only for children's posy patches.

We came to Elmtree at last, quiet and peaceful, a village like many others nestling among the Massachusetts hills, but to me the dearest place in all the world. Along the blossom-bordered road we drove, till at length, turning sharply, we saw the green common ahead; and to the right, our own house, cool and inviting in the shade of its great elms.

'Twas almost more than Jimmy and I could do to sit in the coach, but if we could not run ahead we could talk and as each familiar object came into view we shouted a greeting.

No one was in sight when we drove up to the house, but the windows were open, and the stiff, starched curtains, blowing lazily in and out, seemed to say that Aunt Nabby was within, attending to her duties with no regard for the war and its issues.



It was the safe-conduct given me by Mr. Washington

We children scrambled out of the carriage the moment it halted and raced for the front door; but, ere we were half-way, it opened; and there, framed in its white woodwork, stood Cecelie Pemberton!

For an instant surprise held us both dumb, then with a cry of delight we rushed into each other's arms, while Jimmy danced about demanding answers to a dozen questions.

Over my shoulder Cecelie saw her mother descending from the carriage and flew to her. Their meeting would have melted the hardest of hearts.

"What of your father, dear," asked Madam Pemberton, in a broken voice, after they had embraced.

"He is inside, safe and well," she answered. "His foot is better and he will be able to walk soon, I hope. Did you not get my letters?"

"Nay, we have heard naught since you wrote to Charlotte," was the answer.

"Oh, poor Mother! Come in at once," murmured Cecelie, and she half dragged Madam Pemberton into the house while we stayed to greet Aunt Abigail, who now appeared, unchanged in looks or manner.

"Well, James," she said stiffly, as if we had but been gone over night, "I hope you are cured of your silly politics. Your room is ready for you."

"Are you not glad to see us, Abigail?" father asked with a smile.

"Aye, there's a deal for you to attend to," she

replied, and turned to Jimmy, who was shouting with glee.

"I would have you know, sir," she addressed him with a frown, "that I have that in my closet which is a sure cure for too much noise."

"Oh, Aunt Nabby," he answered saucily, "I have ne'er been punished since I left you. 'Twill make me feel at home again," and he rushed to her, clasping her skirts in ecstasy.

Her grim humour could not resist that, and she leaned down and hugged the boy tightly, tears coming into her eyes. For all her stiff ways Aunt Nabby loved us, and Jimmy she adored.

"Well, miss," she said, looking me up and down critically, "did you fetch the pins?"

"No, Aunt Nabby," I answered, "but don't let's think of them now."

"Nay, my dear, I never expected you to remember them," she returned, taking me in her arms and kissing me heartily. "I think, Charlotte, your talents lie not toward the domestic virtues, but it is my duty to teach you to remember.—You are growing out of that dress; I hope there is a generous hem," and she looked to see.

We went into the house and found Colonel Pemberton stretched upon the couch, but save for his foot he was quite well. How he and Cecelie happened to be there was quickly told. He had been wounded in the battle of White Plains and left for dead upon the field. Later he had regained con-

sciousness and crawled to a house nearby. Its owner was a Tory and he had lain hid there till Cecelie, with Ethan's help, had come upon him. He was then, perforce, made prisoner, but was paroled in Ethan's charge and prevailed upon to take up his abode with Cecelie at our house in Elmtree, so that he might have the benefit of Dr. Jones's surgical skill.

Cecelie ran with me to advise Jane of our return, but instead of answering the many questions I had ready, she spent most of the time upon the way in berating me for not having told her more of Ethan.

"You never told me he was so different from other young men," she complained. "And as for your portrait of him — I will admit there is a likeness, but 'tis not near as handsome as the original."

All this pleased me mightily, for I loved to hear Ethan praised, even at the expense of the picture I had made; but what lay beneath this admiration I never guessed till days later.

Even Moll Butts failed to set me upon the track.

"Wait till you see them together, Miss Sharly," she whispered mysteriously.

"And what then?" I asked, having no notion of her meaning.

"As if you didn't know," she giggled, and ran off.

Now that we were home again, there was one matter that plagued me mightily, and one night after Cecelie was asleep, I slipped from my bed intending

to venture another visit to the wise woman. On the instant my room-mate raised a startled nightcap from her pillow.

"Where are you going, miss?" she demanded, and so perforce I had to tell her of the witch.

"Think you she would give *me* my heart's desire?" she asked excitedly at the end.

"Come with me and try her," I suggested, glad of company.

"Nay," she shook her head, snuggling under the covers, "I'll wait and see first if I get it not without her help."

So it happened that I stood once more on the wise woman's hearthstone and watched her as she gazed down at a bit of gold in her hand.

"This comes from a land whose king lost a fine jewel from his crown on the day of his coronation. 'Twas emblematic of what has come to pass. This country is already lost to him," she murmured half to herself. "But what brings you here? Your wish is already fulfilled."

"I think so," I faltered, "but perchance it will lead him into new dangers, and I shall feel that 'twas I who caused it all. Can you not promise me that father and Ethan will both be safe?"

"Aye, I can promise," said the old woman, "but can I perform? No, child, keep your money. Put your trust in God, the merciful, and not in a weak old woman." She handed me back the coin.

"But," I persisted, "at least can you not tell me what to expect, you who are so wise?"

"Aye," returned the wise woman, "expect much happiness, for 'tis your nature to be happy. Some sorrow, for sorrow comes to all. But," she ended kindly, "look for no grief through this war. I see no trouble hovering over your young head."

"Nay, now," I cried delightedly, "you needs must keep the money, for that's good news indeed," and I ran from the hut and so home.

Almost from the first moment of our arrival father showed a strong desire to see Ethan.

"It is of the utmost importance that I should speak with him," he affirmed.

"Of late he arrives when least expected," Aunt Nabby remarked, "but I cannot say he is much help to me in caring for the place."

"Know you where he is quartered?" father asked.

"Nay, he says naught to me of his politics," answered Aunt Nabby, bristling.

"I think he is stationed at West Point, Mr. Morton," Cecelie volunteered. "There is little danger of an attack there and I shouldn't be surprised if we saw him soon." She said it very sweetly, casting down her eyes, but I could see no reason for her blushing so red.

Her prophecy proved true, for one morning who should come riding in but Ethan, fair and handsome

in his Continental uniform. Cecelie was on the lawn as he arrived, and he leaped from his horse at sight of her.

Moll called me to the window, but they only shook hands and could scarce have said a word together, for Cecelie came running into the house almost at once.

"There, now," whispered Moll. "What did I tell you?"

"They scarce spoke," I returned. "I hope they haven't quarrelled."

"Nay, no fear of that," sniffed Moll. "Think you lovers have need of words when they can look into each other's eyes?"

"Oh, Moll, is that what you mean?" I burst out, a great light breaking in upon me. "That would be splendid! Now I wonder — was *that* her heart's desire?"

"Aye, I'm sure it was," Moll answered.

"Then Cecelie will be my sister!" I exclaimed, and so in the end it proved.

Ethan was surprised and delighted to see us all; but for a moment he wondered what greeting to expect from father. Doubtless he feared they were still to be at odds.

But this uncertainty was soon put to rest. Father met him with a smile of welcome and happiness on his face.

"My boy! My boy!" he cried, in a voice that

brought a throb to my heart, and in a moment they were in each other's arms.

For an instant they stood thus, and then father, drawing back, seized Ethan's hand.

"My boy," he said, "you chose the better part. In my stubborn blindness I would not or could not see. I have come back to my true home, ready to lay down my life if need be, for the sake of this good country of America."

"Oh, Father, what can I say!" cried Ethan, wringing the hand he held.

"And now we are all patriots," shouted Jimmy. "When will you take me to see my general, Ethan?"

"Nay, little son," said father, putting a hand upon the lad's shoulder, "the cause needs men, not children; but there is another in this family who will do his duty. I have but tarried for you, Ethan, to tell me where I can see General Washington. It may be that I am too old to fight, but I care not what work he gives me to do. All I have is at his service."

Father's eyes shone with the enthusiasm he felt, and I knew that this had been in his mind for a long time and he had but waited to announce it first to Ethan.

"But, Father," Ethan asked a little later, "how came you to change your views?"

"It is too long a story to tell you now, Ethan,"

he answered. "I held to my opinions stubbornly, until I stood before the King, face to face. Then I realized that I had been chasing a phantom, as the saying is. But I might never have spoke with George the Third had it not been for Charlotte. Through her I came to see matters in their true light. She's been a fine, brave girl, Ethan, bearing with me in all adversities, without complaint, patient and —"

"Nay, James," Aunt Abigail broke in. "'Praise to the face is open disgrace.' Already I see signs that Charlotte is becoming vain, and I doubt not I shall have my hands full curbing her rebellious spirit," and she scowled at me darkly.

But I cared not what Aunt Nabby might threaten. Had I not my heart's desire?

THE END

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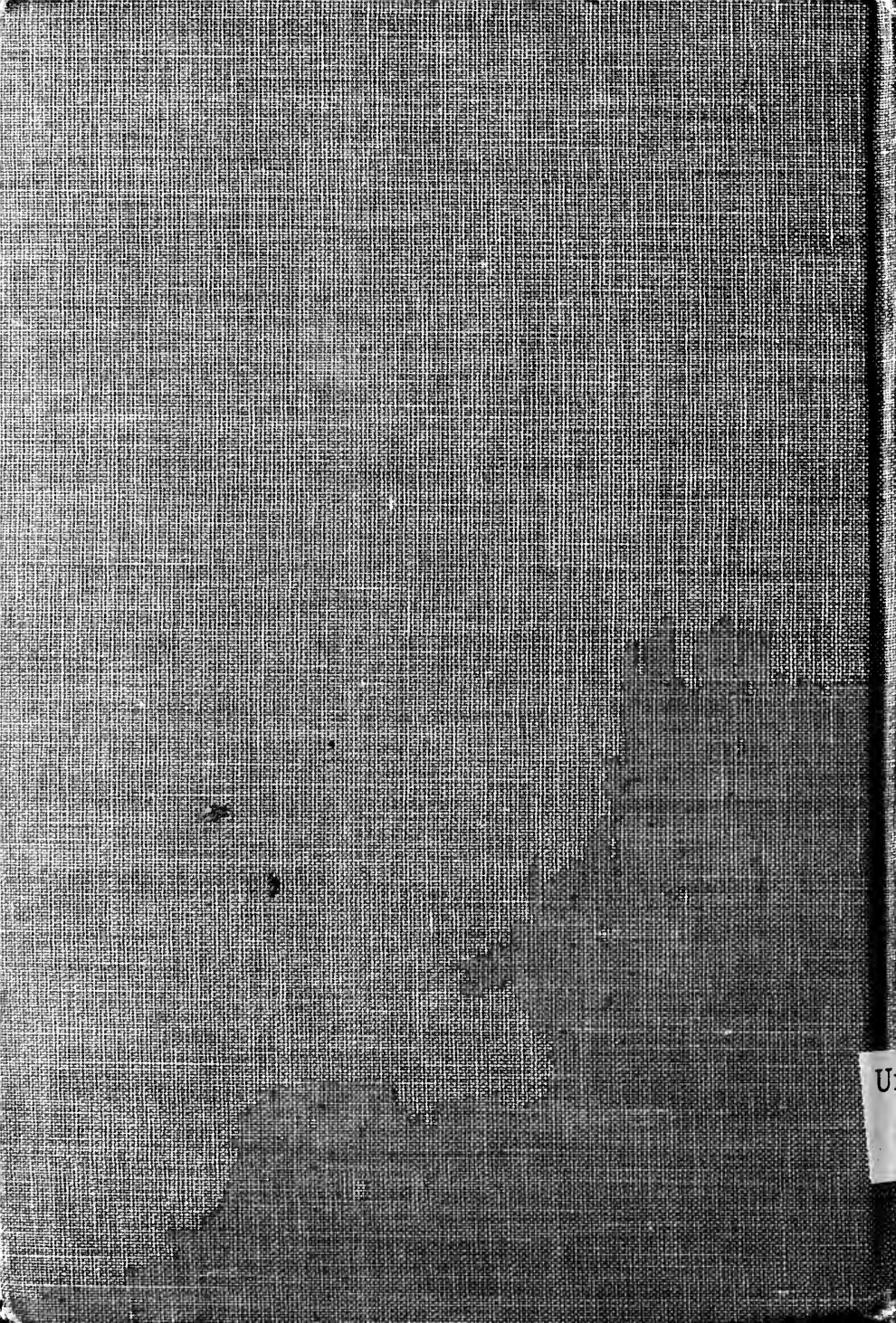
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